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990

LEONORA.

BY

MISS EDGEWORTH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"Se l'amor tuo mi rendi,
Se più fedel sarai,
Son vendicato assai;
Più non desio da te."

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LEONORA.

LETTER XLII.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL, Dec. 13, ——.

I HOPED that you would have favoured us with a passing visit in your way to town, but I know you will tell me that friendship must not interfere with the interests of the service. I have reason to curse those interests of the service, they are for ever at variance with mine. I had a particular desire to speak to you upon a subject on which it is not agreeable to me to write. Lady Leonora also wished extremely and disinterestedly

for your company. She does not know how much she is obliged to you. The laconic advice you gave me some time ago influenced my conduct longer than counsel which is in opposition to our passions usually does, and it has haunted my imagination perpetually.

"My dear L——, do not end by being the dupe of a *frenchified* coquette."

My dear friend, of that there is no danger. No man upon earth despises or detests coquettes more than I do, be they French or English. I think, however, that a foreign-born, or foreign-bred coquette, has more of the ease of *practice*, and less of the awkwardness of conscience, than a home-bred flirt, and is in reality less blameable, for she breaks no restraints of custom or education; she does only what she has seen her mother do before her, and what is authorized by the example

of most of the fashionable ladies of her acquaintance. But let us put flirts and coquettes quite out of the question. My dear General, you know that I am used to women, and take it upon my word, that the lady to whom I allude is more tender and passionate than vain. Every woman has, or has had, a tincture of vanity; but there are a few, and those are to me the most amiable of the sex, who

"Feel every vanity in fondness lost."

You know that I am delicate, even fastidious, in my taste for female manners. Nothing can in my opinion make amends for any offence against propriety, except it be sensibility—genuine generous sensibility. This can, in my mind, cover a multitude of faults. There is so much of selfishness, of hypocrisy, of coldness, in what is usually called female virtue,

that I often turn with distaste from those, to whom I am compelled to do homage for the sake of the general good of society. I am not *charlatan* enough to pretend upon all occasions to prefer the public advantage to my own. I confess that let a woman be ever so fair, or good, or wise;

> "Be she with that goodness blest
> Which may merit name of best,
> If she be not such to me,
> What care I how good she be!"

And I will further acknowledge, that I am not easily satisfied with the manner in which a woman is kind to me; if it be duty-work kindness, I would not give thanks for it; it is done for her reputation, not for me, and let the world thank her. To *the best of wives* I should make the worst of husbands. No—I should, I hope, pay her in her own coin, with all

due observances, attentions, and respect, but without one grain of love. Love is only to be had for love; and without it, nothing a woman can give appears to me worth having. I do not desire to be loved well enough to satisfy fathers and mothers, and uncles and aunts: well enough to decide a woman to marry me rather than disoblige her friends, or run the chance of having *many a worse offer*, and living perhaps to be an old maid. I do not desire to be loved well enough to keep a woman true and faithful to me "*till death us do part*:" in short, I do not desire to be loved well enough for a husband; I desire to be loved sufficiently for a lover; not only above all other persons, but above all other things, all other considerations, to be the first and last object in the heart of the woman to whom I am attached; I wish to feel that I sus-

tain and fill the whole of her heart. I must be certain that I am every thing to her, as she is every thing to me; that there is no imaginable situation in which she would not live with me, in which she would not be happy to live with me; no possible sacrifice that she would not make for me; or rather, that nothing she could do should appear a sacrifice. Are these exorbitant expectations? I am capable of all this, and more, for a woman I love; and it is my pride or my misfortune to be able to love upon no other terms. Such proofs of attachment it may be difficult to obtain, and even to give; more difficult, I am sensible, for a wife than for a mistress. A young lady who is married *secundum artem*, with license and consent of friends, can give no extraordinary instances of affection. I should not consider it as an indisputable

proof of love, that she does me the honour to give me her hand in a church, or that she condescends to bespeak my liveries, or to be handed into her own coach with all the blushing honours of a bride; all the paraphernalia of a wife secured, all the prudent and necessary provision made both for matrimonial love and hatred, dower, pin-money, and separate maintenance on the one hand, and on the other, lands, tenements, and hereditaments for the future son and heir, and sums without end for younger children to the tenth and twentieth possibility, *as the case may be, nothing herein contained to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding.* Such a jargon Cupid does not understand. A woman may love this most convenient personage, her lawful husband; but I should think it difficult for

the delicacy of female passion to survive the cool preparations for hymeneal felicity. At all events, you will allow the lady makes no sacrifice, she shows no great generosity, and she may, or she may not be touched at the altar by the divine flame. My good General, when you are a husband, you will feel these things as I do; till then, it is very easy to talk as you do, and to admire other men's wives, and to wish Heaven had blessed you with such a treasure. For my part, the single idea, that a woman thinks it her duty to be fond of me, would deprive me of all pleasure in her love. No man can be more sensible than I am of the amiable and estimable qualities of Lady Leonora L——; I should be a brute and a liar if I hesitated to give the fullest testimony in her praise; but such is the infirmity of my nature, that I could pardon some

faults more easily than I could like some virtues. The virtues, which leave me in doubt of a woman's love, I can esteem, but that is all. Lady Leonora is calm, serene, perfectly sweet-tempered, without jealousy, and without suspicion; in one word, without love. If she loved me, she never could have been the wife she has been for some months past. You will laugh at my being angry with a wife for not being jealous. But so it is. Certain defects of temper I could bear, if I considered them as symptoms of strong affection. When I for a moment believed that Leonora suffered, when I attributed her fainting at our fête champêtre to jealousy, I was so much alarmed and touched, that I absolutely forgot her rival. I did more; to prevent her feeling uneasiness, to destroy the suspicions which I imagined

had been awakened in her mind, I hesitated not to sacrifice all the pleasure and all the vanity which a man of my age might reasonably be supposed to feel in the prospect of a new and not inglorious conquest; I left home immediately, and went to meet you, my dear friend, on your return from abroad. This visit I do not set down to your account, but to that of honour, foolish, unnecessary honour. You half-persuaded me, that your hear-say Parisian evidence was more to be trusted than my own judgment, and I returned home with the resolution not to be the dupe of a coquette. Leonora's reception of me was delightful; I never saw her in such spirits, or so amiable. But I could not help wishing to ascertain whether I had attributed her fainting to the real cause. This proof I tempted to my cost. Instead of show-

ing any tender alarm at the renewal of my obvious attentions to her rival, she was perfectly calm and collected, went on with her usual occupations, fulfilled all her duties, never reproached me by word or look, never for one moment betrayed impatience, ill-humour, suspicion, or jealousy; in short, I found that I had been fool enough to attribute to excess of affection an accident which proceeded merely from the situation of her health. If anxiety of mind had been the cause of her fainting at the fête champêtre, she would since have felt and shown agitation on a thousand occasions, where she has been perfectly tranquil. Her friend Mrs. C——, who returned here a few days ago, seems to imagine that Leonora looks ill; but I shall not again be led to mistake bodily indisposition for mental suffering. Leonora's conduct argues great

insensibility of soul, or great command; great insensibility, I think: for I cannot imagine such command of temper possible to any but a woman who feels indifference for the offender. Yet, even now that I have steeled myself with this conviction, I am scarcely bold enough to hazard the chance of giving her pain. Absurd weakness! It has been clearly proved to my understanding, that my irresolution, my scruples of conscience, my combats between love and esteem, are more likely to betray the real state of my mind than any decision that I could make. I decide, then—I determine to be happy with a woman who has a soul capable of feeling, not merely what is called conjugal affection, but the passion of love; who is capable of sacrificing every thing to love; who has given me proofs of candour and greatness of mind,

which I value far above all her wit, grace, and beauty. My dear General, I know all that you can tell, all that you can hint concerning her history abroad. I know it from her own lips. It was told to me in a manner that made her my admiration. It was told to me as a preservative against the danger of loving her. It was told to me with the generous design of protecting Leonora's happiness; and all this at the moment when I was beloved, tenderly beloved. She is above dissimulation: she scorns the arts, the fears of her sex. She knows you are her enemy, and yet she esteems you; she urged me to speak to you with the utmost openness: "Let me never," said she, "be the cause of your feeling less confidence or less affection for the best of friends."

R*** is sacrificed to me; that R***,

with whose cursed name you torment-ed me. My dear friend, she will force your admiration, as she has won my love.

Yours sincerely,

F. L——.

LETTER XLIII.

Mrs. C—— to Miss B——.

Dec. 20th, ——.

As I am not trusted with the secret, I may, my dear Margaret, use my own eyes and ears as I please to find it out, and I know Leonora's countenance so well, that I see every thing that passes in her mind just as clearly as if she had told it to me in words.

It grieves me more than I can express to see her suffering as she does. I am now convinced that she has reason to be unhappy; and, what is worse, I do not see what course she can follow to recover her happiness. All her forbearance, all her patience, all her sweet temper, I perceive are useless, or worse than useless, injuri-

ous to her in her strange husband's opinion. I never liked him thoroughly, and now I detest him. He thinks her cold, insensible. She insensible!—Brute! Idiot! Every thing that she says or does displeases him. The merest trifles excite the most cruel suspicions. He totally misunderstands her character, and sees every thing about her in a false light. In short, he is under the dominion of an artful fiend, who works as she pleases upon his passions; upon his pride, which is his ruling passion.

This evening Lady Olivia began confessing that she had too much sensibility, that she was of an excessively susceptible temper, and that she should be terribly jealous of the affections of any person she loved. She did not know how love *could* exist without jealousy. Mr. L—— was present, and listening

eagerly. Leonora's lips were silent; not so her countenance. I was in hopes Mr. L—— would have remarked its beautiful touching expression; but his eyes were fixed upon Olivia. I could have . . . . . but let me go on. Lady Olivia had the malice suddenly to appeal to Leonora, and asked, whether she was never jealous of her husband? Leonora, astonished by her assurance, paused for an instant, and then replied, "It would be difficult to convince me that I had any reason to be jealous of Mr. L——, I esteem him so much."—"I wish to Heaven!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, her eyes turned upwards with a fine St. Cecilia expression, whilst Mr. L——'s attention was fixed upon her, "Would to Heaven I was blessed with such a *reasonable* temper!"—"When you are wishing to Heaven, Lady Olivia," said I, "had not you

better ask for *all you want* at once; not only such a reasonable temper, but such a feeling heart?"

Some of the company smiled. Lady Olivia, practised as she is, looked disconcerted; Mr. L—— grave and impenetrable; Leonora, blushing, turned away to the piano forte. Mr. L—— remained talking with Lady Olivia, and he neither saw nor heard her. If Leonora had sung like an angel it would have made no impression. She turned over the leaves of her music quickly to a lively air, and played it immediately, to prevent my perceiving how much she felt. Poor Leonora! you are but a bad dissembler, and it is in vain to try to conceal yourself from me.

I was so sorry for Leonora, I was so incensed with Olivia this night, that I could not restrain myself, and I made

matters worse. At supper I came almost to open war with her ladyship. I cannot remember exactly what I said, but I know that I threw out the most severe inuendoes which politeness could permit: and what *was* the consequence? Mr. L—— pitied Olivia and hated me; Leonora was in misery the whole time; and her husband probably thought that she was the instigator, though she was perfectly innocent. My dear Margaret, where will all this end? and how much more mischief shall I do with the best intentions possible?

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER XLIV.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

Dec. 22d, ——.

YOUR letter has travelled after me God knows where, my dear L——, and has caught me at last with my foot in the stirrup. I have just had time to look it over. I find, in short, that you are in love. I give you joy! But be in love like a madman, not like a fool. Call a demirep an angel and welcome; but remember that such angels are to be had any day in the year; and such a wife as yours is not to be had for the mines of Golconda. Coin your heart, and drop your blood for it, and you will never be loved by any other woman so well as you are by Lady Leonora L——.

As to your jealous hypochondriacism, more of that when I have more leisure. In the mean time I wish it well cured.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XLV.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Jan. 7, ——.

I TRIUMPH! dear Gabrielle, give me joy! Never was triumph more complete. L—— loves me! That I knew long ago; but I have at last forced from his proud heart the avowal of his passion. Love and Olivia are victorious over scruples, prejudice, pride, and superstition!

Leonora feels not—sees not: she requires, she excites no pity. Long may her delusion last! But even were it this moment to dissipate, what cause have I for remorse? "Who is most to blame, he who ceases to love, or she who ceases to please?" Leonora perhaps thinks that she loves her husband; and no doubt she

does so in a conjugal sort of a way: he *has* loved his wife; but be it mine to prove that his heart is suited to far other raptures; and if Olivia be called upon for sacrifices, *Olivia* can make them.

"Let wealth, let honour wait the wedded dame,
August her deed, and sacred be her fame;
Before true passion all those views remove,
Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to love?"

These lines, though quoted perpetually by the tender and passionate, can never become stale and vulgar; they will always recur in certain situations to persons of delicate sensibility, for they at once express all that can be said, and justify all that can be felt. My amiable Gabrielle, adieu. Pardon me if to day I have no soul even for friendship. This day is all for love.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XLVI.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

Jan. 4, ——.

WHAT the devil would you have of your wife, my dear L——? You would be loved above all earthly considerations; honour, duty, virtue, and religion inclusive, would you? and you would have a wife with her head in the clouds, would you? I wish you were married to one of the all-for-love heroines, who would treat you with bowl and dagger every day of your life. In your opinion sensibility covers a multitude of faults; you would have said *sins*: so it had need, for it produces a multitude. Pray what brings hundreds and thousands of women to the Piazzas of Covent Garden

but sensibility? What does the Colonel's, and the Captain's, and the Ensign's mistress talk of but *sensibility*? And are you, my dear friend, to be duped by this hacknied word? And should you really think it an indisputable proof of a lady's love, that she would jump out of a two pair of stairs window into your arms? Now I should think myself sure of such a woman's love only just whilst I held her in my arms, and scarcely then; for I, who in my own way am jealous as well as yourself, should in this case be jealous of wickedness, and should strongly suspect, that she would love the first devil that she saw better than me.

You are always raving about sacrifices. Your Cupid must be a very vindictive little god; never satisfied with the peace offerings of his votaries. Mine is a good humoured rosy little fellow, who desires

no better than to see me laugh and be happy. But to every man his own Cupid. If you cannot believe in love without sacrifices, you must have them to be sure. And now, in sober sadness, what do you think your heroine would sacrifice for you? Her reputation? that, pardon me, is out of her power. Her virtue? I have no doubt she would. But before I can estimate the value of this sacrifice, I must know whether she makes it to you or to her pleasure. Would she give up in any instance her pleasure for your happiness? This is not an easy matter to ascertain with respect to a mistress: but your wife has put it beyond a doubt, that she prefers your happiness not only to her pleasure, but to her pride, and to every thing that the sex usually prefer to a husband. You have been wounded by a poisoned arrow;

but you have a faithful wife who can extract the poison from the wound. Lady Leonora's affection is not a mere fit of goodness and generosity, such as I have seen in many women, but it is a steadiness of attachment in the hour of trial, which I have seen in few. For several months past you have, by your own account, put her temper and her love to the most severe tests, yet she has never failed for one moment, never reproached you by word or look.—But may be she has no feeling.—No feeling! You can have no feeling if you say so: no penetration if you think so. Would not you think me a tyrant if I put a poor fellow on the picket, and told you, when he bore it without a groan, that it was because he could not feel? You do worse, you torture the soul of the woman who loves you; she en-

dures, she is calm, she smiles upon you even in agony; and you tell me she cannot feel! she cannot feel like an Olivia! No; and so much the better for her husband, for she will then have only feeling enough for him, she will not extend her charity to all his sex. But Olivia has such candour and magnanimity, that I must admire her! I humbly thank her for offering to make me her confidant, for offering to tell me what I know already, and what she is certain that I know. These were good moves, but I understand the game as well as her ladyship does. As to her making a friend of me; if she means an enemy to Lady Leonora L——, I would sooner see her—in Heaven: but if she would do me the favour to think no more of your heart, which is too good for her, and to accept of my . . . . my

. . . . what shall I say . . . . my devoirs, I am at her command. She shall drive my curricle, &c. &c. She would suit me vastly well for a month or two, and by that time poor R*** would make his appearance, or somebody in his stead: at the worst, I should have a chance of some blessed metaphysical quirk, which would prove that inconstancy was a virtue, or that a new love is better than an old one. When it came to that, I should make my best bow, put on my most disconsolate face, and retire.

You will read all this in a very different spirit from that in which it is written. If you are angry—no matter: I am cool. I tell you beforehand that I will not fight you for any thing I have said in this letter, or that I ever may say about your Olivia. Therefore, my dear L——, save yourself the trouble

of challenging me. I thank God I have reputation enough to be able to dispens: with the glory of blowing out your brains.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XLVII.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Jan. 7th, ——.

WE have been very gay here this last fortnight: the gallant and accomplished Prince —— has been here. H****, the witty H****, who is his favourite companion, introduced him, and he seems so much charmed with the old castle, its towers and battlements, and with its *cynosure*, that I know not when he will be able to prevail upon himself to depart. To morrow, he says; but so he has said these ten days: he cannot resist the entreaties of his kind host and hostess to stay another day. The soft accent of the beautiful Leonora will certainly detain him *one day more*, and her gracious smile will bereave him of rest for months to

come. He has evidently fallen desperately in love with her. Now we shall see virtue in danger.

I have always been of opinion with St. Evremond and Ninon de l'Enclos, that no female virtue can stand every species of test; fortunately it is not always exposed to trial. Reputation may be preserved by certain persons in certain situations, upon very easy terms. Leonora, for instance, is armed so strong in character, that no common mortal will venture to attack her. It would be presumption little short of high treason, to imagine the fall of the Lady Leonora L——, daughter of the Duchess of ***, who, with a long line of immaculate baronesses in their own right, each in her armour of stiff stays, stands frowning defiance upon the adventurous knights. More alarming still to the modern se-

ducer appears a judge in his long wig, and a jury with their long faces, ready to bring in their verdict, and to award damages proportionate to the rank and fortune of the parties. Then the former reputation of the lady is talked of, and the irreparable injury sustained by the disconsolate husband from the loss of the solace and affection of this paragon of wives. And it is proved that she lived in the most perfect harmony with him till the vile seducer appeared; who, in aggravation of damages, was a confidential friend of the husband's, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c.

Brave, indeed; and desperately in love must be the man, who could dare all these to deserve the fair. But princes are, it is said, naturally brave, and ambitious of conquering difficulties.——

I have insinuated these reflections in a general way to L——, who applies them so as to plague himself sufficiently. Heaven is my witness, that I mean no injury to Lady Leonora; yet I fear that there are moments, when my respect for her superiority, joined to the consciousness of my own weakness, overpowers me, and I almost envy her the right she retains to the esteem of the man I love. This is a blamable weakness—I know it—I reproach myself bitterly; but all I can do is to confess it candidly. L—— sees my conflicts, and knows how to value the sensibility of my fond heart. Adieu! my Gabrielle. When shall I be happy? since even love has its torments, and I am thus doomed to be ever a victim to the tenderness of my soul.

OLIVIA.

LETTER XLVIII.

Mrs. C—— to Miss B——.

Jan. 8, ——.

I DO not know whether I pity, love, or admire Leonora most. Just when her mind was deeply wounded by her husband's neglect, and when her jealousy was worked to the highest pitch by his passion for her dangerous rival, the Prince —— arrives here, and, struck by Leonora's charms of mind and person, falls passionately in love with her. Probably his Highness's friend H—— had given him a hint of the existing circum stances, and he thought a more propitious moment could scarcely be found for making an impression upon a female mind. He judged of Leonora by

other women. And I, like a simpleton, judged of her by myself. With shame I confess to you, my dear Margaret, that notwithstanding all my past experience, I did expect that she would have done as I am afraid I should have done in her situation. I think that I could not have resisted the temptation of coquetting a little . . . . . a very little . . . . just to revive the passion of the man whom I really loved. This expedient succeeds so often with that wise sex, who never rightly know the value of a heart, except when they have just won it, or at the moment when they are on the point of losing it. In Leonora's place, and in such an emergency, I should certainly have employed that frightful monster jealousy to waken sleeping love; since he, and only he, can do it expeditiously and effectually.

This I have hinted to Leonora, talking always *in generals;* for, since my total overthrow, I have never dared to come to particulars: but by putting cases and *confessing myself*, I contrived to make my thoughts understood. I then boasted of the extreme facility of the means I would adopt to recover a heart. Leonora answered in the words of a celebrated great man:—

"C'est facile de se servir de pareils moyens; c'est difficile de s'y résoudre."

"But if no other means would succeed," said I, "would not you sacrifice your pride to your love?"

"My pride, willingly; but not my sense of what is right," said she, with an indescribable mixture of tenderness and firmness in her manner.

"Can a little coquetry in a good cause be such a heinous offence?" per-

sisted I. I knew that I was wrong all the time; but I delighted in seeing how right she was.

No—she would not allow her mind to be cheated by female sophistry; nor yet by the male casuistry of, "The end sanctifies the means."

"If you had the misfortune to lose the affections of the man you love, and if you were quite certain of regaining them by following my recipe?" said I.

Never shall I forget the look with which Leonora left me, and the accent with which she said, "My dear Helen, if it were ever to be my misfortune to lose my husband's love, I would not, even if I were certain of success, attempt to regain it by any unworthy arts. How could I wish to regain his love at the hazard of losing his esteem, and the certainty of forfeiting my own!

I said no more—I had nothing more to say: I saw that I had given pain, and I have never touched upon the subject since. But her practice is even beyond her theory. Never, by deed, or look, or word, or thought, (for I see all her thoughts in her eloquent countenance,) has she swerved from her principles. No prudery—no coquetry—no mock-humility—no triumph. Never for an instant did she by a proud air say to her husband—See what others think of me! Never did a resentful look say to him—Inconstant!—revenge is in my power! Never even did a reproachful sigh express—I am injured, yet I do not retaliate.

Mr. L—— is blind; he is infatuated; he is absolutely bereaved of judgment by a perfidious, ungrateful, and cruel

wretch. Let me vent my indignation to you, dear Margaret, or it will explode, perhaps, when it may do Leonora mischief.

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER XLIX.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Jan. 9, ——.

"Princes et Rois vont vîtes en amour."

YET Lady Leonora, in her simplicity, never dreamed of love till the Prince's passion was too visible and audible to be misunderstood. And then, she changed her tone, and checked her simplicity, and was so reserved, and so dignified, and so *proper*, it was quite edifying, especially to a poor sinner of a coquette like me; nothing *piquante*; nothing *agaçante*; nothing *demi-voilée*; no retiring to be pursued; not a single manœuvre of coquetry did she practise. This convinces me that she cares not in the least for her husband; because, if

she really loved him, and wished to reclaim his heart, what so natural or so simple as to excite his jealousy, and thus revive his love? After neglecting this golden opportunity, she can never convince me that she is really anxious about her husband's heart. This I hinted to L——, and his own susceptibility had hinted it to him efficaciously before I spoke.

Though Leonora has been so correct hitherto, and so cold to the Prince in her husband's presence, I have my suspicions, that if in his absence proper means were taken, if her pride were roused by apt suggestions, if it were delicately pointed out to her that she is shamefully neglected, that she is a cipher in her own house, that her husband presumes too much upon her sweetness of temper, that his inconstancy

is wondered at by all who have eyes, and that a little retaliation might become her ladyship, I would not answer for her forbearance: that is to say, if all this were done by a dexterous man, a lover, and a prince! I shall take care my opinions shall be known; for I cannot endure to have the esteem of the man I love monopolized. Exposed to temptation as I have been, and with as ardent affections, Leonora, or I am much mistaken, would not have been more estimable. Adieu, my dearest Gabrielle. Nous verrons!—Nous verrons!

OLIVIA.

Sunday Evening.

P. S. I open my letter to tell you that the Prince is actually gone. Doubtless he will return at a more auspicious moment.

Lady M—— and all the troop of friends are to depart on Monday; all but *the* bosom friend, *l'amie intime*, that insupportable Helen, who is ever at daggers drawing with me. So much the better! L—— sees her cabals with his wife; she is a partizan without the art to be so to any purpose, and her manœuvres tend only to increase his partiality for his Olivia.

LETTER L.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Jan. 19, ——.

* * * * * * * * *

* * * * * * In short, Leonora has discovered all that she might have seen months ago between her husband and me. What will be the consequence? I long, yet almost fear, to meet her again. She is now in her own apartment, writing, I presume, to her mother for advice.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LI.

Leonora to Olivia.

[Left on Lady Olivia's Dressing-table.]

Jan. 12, ——.

O YOU, whom no kindness can touch, whom no honour can bind, whom no faith can hold, enjoy the torments you have inflicted on me! enjoy the triumph of having betrayed a confiding friend! Friend no more—affect, presume, no longer to call me friend! I am under no necessity to dissemble, and dissimulation is foreign to my habits, and abhorrent to my nature! I know you to be my enemy, and I say so; my most cruel enemy; one who could, without reluctance or temptation, rob me of all I hold most dear. Yes, without temptation;

for you do not love my husband, Olivia. On this point I cannot be mistaken; I know too well what it is to love him. Had you been struck by his great or good and amiable qualities, charmed by his engaging manners, or seduced by the violence of his passion; and had I seen you honourably endeavour to repress that passion; had I seen in you the slightest disposition to sacrifice your pleasure or your vanity to friendship or to duty, I think I could have forgiven, I am sure I should have pitied you. But you felt no pity for me, no shame for yourself; you made no attempt to avoid, you invited the danger. Mr. L—— was not the deceiver, but the deceived. By every art and every charm in your power, and you have many, you won upon his senses and worked upon his imagination; you saw, and made it

your pride to conquer the scruples of that affection he once felt for his wife, and that wife was your friend. By passing bounds, which he could not conceive that any woman could pass, except in the delirium of passion, you made him believe, that your love for him exceeds all that I am capable of feeling, all that I feel. How he will find himself deceived! If you had loved him as I do, you could not so easily have forfeited all claim to his esteem. Had you loved him so much, you would have loved honour more.

It is possible that Mr. L—— may taste some pleasure with you whilst his delusion lasts, whilst his imagination paints you, as mine once did, in false colours, possessed of generous virtues, and the victim of excessive sensibility: but when he sees you such as you are,

he will recoil from you with aversion, he will reject you with contempt.

Knowing my opinion of you, Lady Olivia, you will not choose to remain in this house; nor can I desire for my guest one, whom I can no longer, in private or in public, make my companion. Adieu.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER LII.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Jan. 12, ——.
Midnight.

FAREWELL for ever!—It must be so —Farewell for ever! Would to Heaven I had summoned courage sooner to pronounce these fatal, necessary, irrevocable words. Then had I parted from you without remorse, without the obloquy to which I am now exposed. Oh, my dearest L——! Mine, do I still dare to call you? Yes, mine for the last time, I must call you, mine I must fancy you, though for the impious thought the Furies themselves were to haunt me to madness. My dearest L——, never more must we meet in this world! Think not that my weak voice

alone forbids it: no, a stronger voice than mine is heard—an injured wife reclaims you. What a letter have I just received . . . . !—from . . . . Leonora! She tells me that she no longer desires for her guest one, whom she cannot, in public or private, make her companion.—Oh, Leonora, it was sufficient to banish me from your heart! She tells me not only that I have for ever forfeited her confidence, her esteem, her affection; but that I shall soon be your aversion and contempt. Oh cruel, cruel words! But I submit—I have deserved it all—I have robbed her of a heart above all price. Leonora, why did you not reproach me more bitterly? I desire, I implore to be crushed, to be annihilated by your vengeance! Most admirable, most virtuous, most estimable of women, best of wives, I have

with sacrilegious love profaned a soul consecrated to you and conjugal virtue. I acknowledge my crime; trample upon me as you will, I am humbled in the dust. More than all your bitterest reproaches do I feel the remorse of having for a moment interrupted such serenity of happiness.

Oh, why did you persuade me, L——, and why did I believe that Leonora was calm and free from all suspicion? How could I believe that any woman, whom you had ever loved, could remain blind to your inconstancy, or feel secure indifference? Happy woman! in you to love is not a crime; you may glory in your passion, whilst I must hide mine from every human eye, drop in shameful secresy the burning tear, stifle the struggling sigh, blush at the conflicts of virtue and sensibility, and carry

shame and remorse with me to the grave. Happy Leonora! happy even when most injured, you have a right to complain to him you love, he is yours—you are his wife—his esteem, his affection are yours. On Olivia he has bestowed but a transient thought, and eternal ignominy must be her portion. So let it be—so I wish it to be. Would to Heaven I may thus atone for the past, and secure your future felicity. Fly to her, my dearest L——, I conjure you! throw yourself at her feet, entreat, implore, obtain her forgiveness. She cannot refuse it to your tears, to your caresses. To withstand them she must be more or less than woman. No, she cannot resist your voice when it speaks words of peace and love; she will press you with transport to her heart, and Olivia, poor Olivia, will be for ever for-

gotten; yet she will rejoice in your felicity; absolved perhaps in the eye of Heaven, though banished from your society, she will die content.

Full well am I aware of the consequences of quitting thus precipitately the house of Lady Leonora L——: but nothing that concerns myself alone can for a moment make me hesitate to do that which the sentiment of virtue dictates, and which is yet more strongly urged by regard for the happiness of one, who once allowed me to call her friend. I know my reputation is irrecoverably sacrificed; but it is to one for whom I would lay down my life. Can a woman, who feels as I do, deem any earthly good a sacrifice for him she loves? Dear L——, adieu for ever!

OLIVIA.

LETTER LIII.

Leonora to the Duchess of ——.

DEAREST MOTHER, Jan. 13, ——.

IT is all over—my husband is gone—gone perhaps for ever—all is in vain—all is lost!

Without saying more to you than I ought, I may tell you, that in consequence of an indignant letter which I wrote last night to Lady Olivia, she left my house this morning early, before any of the family were up. Mr. L—— heard of her departure before I did. He has, I will not say followed her, for of that I am not certain; but he has quitted home, and without giving me one kind look at parting, without even

noticing a letter which I left last night upon his table. At what slight things we catch to save us from despair! How obstinate, how vain is hope! I fondly hoped, even to the last moment, that this letter, this foolish letter, would work a sudden change in my husband's heart, would operate miracles, would restore me to happiness. I fancied, absurdly fancied, that laying open my whole soul to him would have an effect upon his mind. Alas! has not my whole soul been always open to him? Could this letter tell him any thing but what he knows already, or what he will never know—how well I love him! I was weak to expect so much from it; yet as it expressed without complaint the anguish of disappointed affection, it deserved at least some acknowledgment. Could not he have said, "My dear

Leonora, I thank you for your letter?"—or more coldly still—"Leonora, I have received your letter." Even that would have been some relief to me: but now all is despair. I saw him just when he was going away, but for a moment; till the last instant he was not to be seen; then, in spite of all his command of countenance, I discerned strong marks of agitation; but towards me an air of resentment, more than any disposition to kinder thoughts. I fancy that he scarcely knew what he said, nor, I am sure, did I. He talked, I remember, of having immediate business in town, and I endeavoured to believe him. Contrary to his usual composed manner, he was in such haste to be gone, that I was obliged to send his watch and purse after him, which he had left upon his bed. How melancholy his room looked to me!

His clothes just as he had left them—a rose which Lady Olivia gave him yesterday was in water on his table. My letter was not there; so he has it, probably unread. He will read it sometime or other perhaps—and sometime or other, perhaps, when I am dead and gone, he will believe I loved him. Could he have known what I felt at the moment when he turned from me, he would have pitied me; for his nature, his character, cannot be quite altered in a few months, though he has ceased to love Leonora. From the window of my own room I watched for the last glimpse of him—heard him call to the postillions, and bid them "drive fast—faster." This was the last sound I heard of his voice. When shall I hear that voice again? I think, that I shall certainly hear from him the day after to-morrow——and

I wish to-day and to-morrow were gone.

I am afraid that you will think me very weak; but, my dear mother, I have no motive for fortitude now; and perhaps it might have been better for me, if I had not exerted so much. I begin to fear that all my fortitude is mistaken for indifference. Something Mr. L—— said the other day about sensibility and sacrifices, gave me this idea. Sensibility!—It has been my hard task for some months past to repress mine, that it might not give pain or disgust. I have done all that my reason and my dearest mother counselled; surely I cannot have done wrong. How apt we are to mistake the opinion or the taste of the man we love for the rule of right! Sacrifices! What sacrifices can I make? —All that I have, is it not his?—My

whole heart, is it not his?—Myself, all that I am, all that I *can* be? Have I not lived with him of late, without recalling to his mind the idea that I suffer by his neglect? Have I not left his heart at liberty, and can I make a greater sacrifice? I really do not understand what he means by sacrifices. A woman who loves her husband is part of him; whatever she does for him is for herself. I wish he would explain to me what he can mean by sacrifices—but when will he ever again explain his thoughts and feelings to me?

My dearest mother, it has been a relief to my mind to write all this to you; if there is no sense in it you will forgive, and encourage me by your affection and strength of mind, which, in all situations, have such power to soothe and support your daughter.

Lady M*** and all my friends, except my dear Helen, left me last week. The Prince ——, who spent a fortnight here, paid me particular attention. I fancied that once or twice my husband's love was awakened by jealousy: but I disdained to use any *indirection* to regain his heart. I should disdain a heart that could be so regained.

The Prince talked of soon paying us another visit. If he should, I will not receive him in Mr. L——'s absence. This may seem like vanity or prudery; but no matter what it appears, if it is right.

Well might you, my best friend, bid me beware of forming an intimacy with an unprincipled woman. I have suffered severely for neglecting your counsels; how much I have still to endure

is yet to be tried: but I can never be entirely miserable whilst I possess, and whilst I hope that I deserve the affection of such a mother.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER LIV.

The Duchess of ——— to her Daughter.

Jan. 15, ——.

IF my approbation and affection can sustain you in this trying situation, your fortitude will not forsake you, my beloved daughter; the motive is stronger now than it has ever been. Great minds rise in adversity; they are always equal to the trial, and superior to injustice: betrayed and deserted, they feel their own force, and they rely upon themselves. Be yourself, my Leonora! Persevere as you have begun, and, trust me, you will be happy. I abide by my first opinion, I repeat my prophecy—your husband's esteem, affection, love, will be permanently yours. Change of cir-

cumstances, however alarming, cannot shake the fixed judgment of my understanding. Character, as you justly observe, cannot utterly change in a few months. Your husband is deceived, he is now as one in the delirium of a fever; he will recover his senses, and see Lady Olivia and you such as you are.

You do not explain, and I take it for granted you have good reasons for not explaining to me more fully the immediate cause of your letter to Lady Olivia. I am sorry that any cause should have thrown her upon the protection of Mr. L——; for a man of honour and generosity feels himself bound to treat with tenderness a woman, who appears to sacrifice every thing for his sake. Consider this in another point of view, and it will afford you subject of consolation; for it is always a consolation

to good minds to think those whom they love less to blame than they appear to be. You will be more calm and patient when you reflect, that your husband's absence may be prolonged by a mistaken sense of honour. From the nature of his connexion with Lady Olivia it cannot last long. Had she saved appearances, and engaged him in a sentimental affair, it might have been far more dangerous to your happiness.

I entirely approve of your conduct with respect to the Prince: it is worthy of my child, and just what I should have expected from her. The artifices of coquettes, and all the *art* of love is beneath her; she has far other powers and resources, and need not strive to maintain her dignity by vengeance. I admire your magnanimity, and I still more admire your good sense; for high

spirit is more common in our sex than good sense. Few know how and when they should sacrifice small considerations to great ones. You say that you will not receive the Prince in your husband's absence, though this may be attributed to prudery or vanity, &c. &c. You are quite right. How many silly women sacrifice the happiness of their lives to the idea of what women or men, as silly as themselves, will say or think of their motives. How many absurd heroines of romance, and of those who imitate them in real life, do we see, who can never act with common sense or presence of mind; if a man's carriage breaks down, or his horse is tired at the end of their avenues, or for some such ridiculous reason, they must do the very reverse of all they know to be prudent. Perpetually exposed, by a fatal

concurrence of circumstances, to excite the jealousy of their lovers and husbands, they create the necessity, to which they fall a victim. I rejoice that I cannot feel any apprehension of my daughter's conducting herself like one of these novel-bred ladies.

I am sorry, my dear, that Lady M—— and your friends have left you: yet even in this there may be good. Your affairs will be made less public, and you will be less the subject of impertinent curiosity. I advise you, however, to mix as much as usual with your neighbours in the country: your presence, and the dignity of your manners, will impose silence upon idle tongues. No wife of real spirit solicits the world for compassion: she who does not court popularity, ensures respect.

Adieu, my dearest child, the time will come when your husband will feel the full merit of your fortitude; when he will know how to distinguish between true and false sensibility; between the love of an Olivia and of a Leonora.

———.

LETTER LV.

Mrs. C—— to Miss B——.

MY DEAR MARGARET, Jan. 16, ——.

I SHALL never forgive myself. I fear I have done Leonora irreparable injury; and, dear magnanimous sufferer, she has never reproached me! In a fit of indignation and imprudent zeal I made a discovery, which has produced a total breach between Leonora and Lady Olivia, and in consequence of this Mr. L—— has gone off with her Ladyship *. We have heard nothing from Mr. L—— since his departure, and Leonora is more unhappy than ever, and

my imprudence is the cause of this. Yet she continues to love me, and treats me with so much generous kindness! She is an angel! I have promised her not to mention her affairs in future even in any of my letters to you, dear Margaret. Pray quiet any reports you may hear, and stop idle tongues.

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——.

LETTER LVI.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 16, ——.

I DO not think I could have borne with temper from any other man breathing the last letter which I received from you. I am sensible that it was written with the best intentions for my happiness; but I must now inform you, that the lady in question has accepted of my protection, and consequently no man who esteems me can treat her with disrespect.

It is no longer a question, what she will sacrifice for me; she has shown the greatest generosity and tenderness of soul; and I should despise myself, if I

did not exert every power to make her happy.—We are at Richmond; but if you write, direct to me at my house in town.

Yours sincerely,

F. L.

LETTER LVII.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

Jan. 19, ——.

DREAM your dream out, my dear L——. Since you are angry with me, as Solander was with sir Joseph Banks for awakening him, I shall not take the liberty of shaking you any more. I believe I shook you rather too roughly: but I assure you it was for your good, as people always tell their friends, when they do the most disagreeable things imaginable. Forgive me, and I will let you dream in peace. You will however allow me to watch by you whilst you sleep; and, my dear somnambulist, I may just take care that you do not knock your head against a post, or fall into a well.

I hope you will not have any objection to my paying my respects to Lady Olivia when I come to town, which, I flatter myself, I shall be able to do shortly. The fortifications here are almost completed.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LVIII.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Richmond, Jan. 23, ——.

HAPPY!—No, my dear Gabrielle, nor shall I ever be happy, whilst I have not exclusive possession of the heart of the man I love. I have sacrificed every thing to him; I have a right to expect, that he should sacrifice at least a wife for me—a wife whom he only esteems. But L—— has not sufficient strength of mind to liberate himself from the cob-webs which restrain those, who talk of conscience, and who, in fact, are only superstitious. I see with indignation, that his soul is continually struggling between passion for me and a something, I know not what to call it, that he feels

for this wife. His thoughts are turning towards home. I believe that to an Englishman's ears there is some magic in the words *home* and *wife*. I used to think foreigners ridiculous for associating the ideas of Milord Anglois with roast beef and pudding; but I begin to see that they are quite right, and that an Englishman has a certain set of inveterate *homely* prejudices, which are necessary to his well-being, and almost to his existence. You may entice him into the land of sentiment, and for a time keep him there; but refine and polish and enlighten him as you will, he recurs to his own plain sense, as he terms it, on the first convenient opportunity. In short, it is lost labour to civilize him, for sooner or later he will *hottentot* again. Pray introduce that term, Gabrielle—*you* can translate it. For my part I can intro-

duce nothing here; my manière d'être is really insupportable; my talents are lost; I, who am accustomed to shine in society, see nobody; I might, as Josephine every day observes, as well be buried alive. Retirement and love are charming; but then it must be perfect love—not the equivocating sort that L—— feels for me, which keeps the word of promise only to the ear. I bear every sort of désagrément for him; I make myself a figure for the finger of scorn to point at, and he insults me with esteem for a wife. Can you conceive this, my amiable Gabrielle?—No, there are ridiculous points in the characters of my countrymen, which you will never be able to comprehend. And what is still more incomprehensible, [illegible] fate to love this man; yes, passionately to love him!—But he must give me proof of recipro-

cal passion. I have too much spirit to sacrifice every thing for him, who will sacrifice nothing for me. Besides, I have another motive. To you, my faithful Gabrielle, I open my whole heart. —Pride inspires me as well as love. I am resolved that Leonora, the haughty Leonora, shall live to repent of having insulted and exasperated Olivia. In some situations, contempt can be answered only by vengeance; and when the malice of a contracted and illiberal mind provokes it, revenge is virtue. Leonora has called me her enemy, and consequently has made me such. 'Tis she has declared the war! 'tis for me to decide the victory!

L——, I know, has the offer of an embassy to P[illegible]g.—He shall accept it.—I will accompany him thither. Lady Leonora may, in his absence, console

herself with her august counsellor and mother:—that proudest of earthly paragons is yet to be taught the extent of Olivia's power. Adieu, my charming Gabrielle! I will carry your tenderest remembrances to our brilliant Russian Princess. She has often invited me, you know, to pay her a visit, and this will be the ostensible object of my journey. A horrible journey to be sure!!! —But what will not love undertake and accomplish, especially when goaded by pride, and inspirited by great revenge?

OLIVIA.

LETTER LIX.

Mrs. C—— to Miss B——.

Jan. 23, ——.

THOUGH I am forbidden to speak of Leonora's affairs, I may mention her health; but not to herself, for she insists upon it that she is perfectly well, while I see that her body is sustained only by her mind—by that mind which I never saw equalled in fortitude, tenderness, and magnanimity.

I cannot express what I feel at seeing so excellent, so dear a friend suffer, without having the power to afford her the least assistance. In all my misfortunes she was my support, my never-failing consolation; but I can do nothing for her but love her, and that I

do with my whole soul. She is a most amiable creature, and her husband deserves . . . . . but that I must not say. Adieu, then.

Your affectionate

HELEN C——.

LETTER LX.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Jan. 25, ——.

VICTIM to the delusions of passion, too well I know my danger, and now, even now foresee my miserable fate. Too well I know, that the delicious poison which spreads through my frame, exalts, entrances, but to destroy. Too well I know that the meteor fire, which shines so bright on my path, entices me forward but to plunge me in the depths of infamy. The long warnings of recorded time teach me, that perjured man triumphs, disdains, and abandons. Too well, alas! I know these fatal truths; too well I feel my approaching doom. Yet, infatuated as I am, pre-

science avails not, the voice of prudence warns, the hand of Heaven beckons me in vain.

My friend! my more than friend, my lover! beloved beyond expression! you to whom I immolate myself, you for whom I sacrifice more than life, O whisper words of peace! for you, and you alone, can tranquilize this agitated bosom. Assure me, L——, if with truth you can assure me, that I have no rival in your affections. O tell me that the name of wife does not invalidate the claims of love! Repeat to me, a thousand times repeat, that I am sole possessor of your heart!

The moment you quit me I am overpowered with melancholy forebodings. Scarcely are you out of my sight, before I dread that I should never see you more, or that some fatality should de-

prive me of your love. When shall the sails of love waft us from this dangerous shore? O! when shall I dare to call you mine? Heavens! how many things may intervene . . . . Let nothing detain you from Richmond this evening: but come not at all—come no more, unless to reassure my trembling heart, and to convince me, that love and Olivia have banished every other image.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXI.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL, Jan. 26, ——.

I AM come to a resolution to accept of that embassy to Russia, which I lately refused. My mind has been in such constant anxiety for some time past, that my health has suffered, and change of air and place are necessary to me. You will say, that the climate of Russia is a strange choice for an invalide: I could indeed have wished for a milder; but in this world we must be content with the least of two evils. I wish to have some ostensible reason for going abroad, and this embassy is the only one that presents itself in an unquestionable shape.

Any thing is better than staying where I am, and *as* I am. My motives are not so entirely personal and selfish as I have stated them. A man who has a grain of feeling cannot endure to see the woman whom he loves, whose only failing is her love, living in a state of dereliction, exposed to the silent scorn of her equals and inferiors, if not to open insult. All her fine talents, every advantage of nature and education, sacrificed, and her sensibility to shame a perpetual source of misery. A man must be a brute, if he do not feel for a woman whose affection for him has reduced her to this situation. My delicacy as to female manners, and the high value I set upon public opinion in all that concerns the sex, make me peculiarly susceptible and wretched in my present circumstances. To raise the drooping

spirits, and support the self-approbation of a woman, who is conscious that she has forfeited her claim to respect, to make love supply the place of all she has sacrificed to love, is a difficult and exquisitely painful task. My feelings render hers more acute, and the very precautions which I take, however delicate, alarm and wound her pride, by reminding her of all she wishes to forget. In this country no woman, who is not lost to shame, can bear to live without reputation.——I pass over a great many intermediate ideas, my dear General; your sense and feeling will supply them. You see the expediency, the necessity of my accepting this embassy. Olivia urges, how can I refuse it? She wishes to accompany me. She made this offer with such decision of spirit, with such passionate tenderness, as touched me

to the very soul. A woman, who really loves, absolutely devotes herself, and becomes insensible to every difficulty and danger; to her all parts of the world are alike; all she fears is to be separated from the object of her affections.

Leonora never loved me as Olivia does. But Lady Leonora is a most respectable, amiable woman, and no man can be more conscious than I am of her full merit. She has all the virtues in their due proportion. But the very excess of certain passions proves them to be genuine. Even whilst we blame the rashness of those, who act from the enthusiasm of their natures, whilst we foresee all the perils to which they seem blind, we tremble at their danger, we grow more and more interested for them every moment, we ad-

mire their courage, we long to snatch them from their fate, we are irresistibly hurried along with them down the precipice.

But why do I say all this to you, my dear General? To no man upon earth could it be more ineffectually addressed. Let me see you however before we leave England. It would be painful to me to quit this country without taking leave of you, notwithstanding all that you have lately done to thwart my inclinations, and notwithstanding all I may expect you to say when we meet. Probably I shall be detained here some weeks, as I must wait for instructions from our court. I write this day to Lady Leonora, to inform her that I am appointed embassador to Russia. She shall have all the honours of war; she shall be treated with all the

respect to which she is so well entitled. I suppose that she will wish to reside with her mother during my absence. She cannot do better: she will then be in the most eligible situation, and I shall be relieved from all anxiety upon her account. She will be perfectly happy with her mother. I have often thought, that she was much happier before she married me than she has been since our union.

I have some curiosity to know whether she will see the Prince when I am gone. Do not mistake me, I am not jealous: I have too little love, and too much esteem for Leonora, to feel the slightest jealousy. I have no doubt, that if I were to stay in Russia for ten years, and if all the princes and potentates in Europe were to be at her feet, my wife would conduct herself with the most edifying

propriety: but I am a little cu[illegible] know how far vanity or pri[illegible] sole a virtuous woman for the[illegible] love.

Yours truly,

F. L.

LETTER LXII.

Madame de P—— to Olivia.

Paris.

YOU are really decided then to go to Russia, my amiable friend, and you will absolutely undertake this horrible voyage! And you are not intimidated by the idea of the immense distance between Petersburg and Paris! Alas! I had hoped soon to see you again. The journey from my convent to Paris was the longest and most formidable that I ever undertook, and at this moment it appears to me terrible; you may conceive therefore my admiration of your courage and strength of mind, my dear Olivia, who are going to brave the

ocean, turning your back on Paris, and every moment receding from our polished centre of attraction, to perish perhaps among mountains of ice. Mon Dieu! it makes me shudder to think of it. But if it pleases Heaven that you should once arrive at Petersburg, you will crown your tresses with diamonds, you will envelope yourself with those superb furs of the north, and smiling at all the dangers you have passed, you will be yourself a thousand times more dangerous than they. You, who have lived so long at Paris, who speak our language in all its shades of elegance; you, who have divined all our secrets of pleasing, who have caught our very air;

"Et la grâce, encore plus belle que la beauté."

You, who are absolutely a French wo-

man, and a Parisian, what a sensation you will produce at Petersburg!—Quels succès vous attendent!—Quels hommages!

You will have the goodness to offer my tenderest sentiments, and the assurances of my perfect respect, to our dear Princess; you will also find the proper moment to remind her of the promise she made to send me specimens of the fine ermines and sables of her country. For my part, I used to be, I confess, in a great error with respect to furs: I always acknowledged them to be rich, but avoided them as heavy; I considered them as fitter for the stiff magnificence of an empress of all the Russias, than for the light elegance of a Parisian beauty; but our charming Princess convinced me that this is a heresy in taste. When I

beheld the grace with which she wore her ermine, and the art with which she knew how to vary its serpent folds as she moved, or as she spoke, the variety it gave to her costume and attitudes; the developement it afforded to a fine hand and arm, the resource in the pauses of conversation, and that soft and attractive air which it seemed to impart even to the play of her wit, I could no longer refuse my homage to ermine. Such is the despotism of beauty over all the [illegible] nd fashion: and with yo[illegible] friendship [illegible] ne[illegible] to a mere intercourse of sentiment, but will, if you have courage to second her views, give you a secret yet decisive weight and consequence, of which you have hitherto never dreamed.—

I must make you understand me, my dear Olivia; your Gabrielle is not so frivolous as simpletons imagine. Frivolity is an excellent, because an unsuspected mask, under which serious and important designs may be safely concealed. I would explain myself further, but must now go to the opera to see the new ballet. Let me know, my interesting, my sublime Olivia, when you are positively determined on your voyage to Petersburg; and then [illegible] ainted [illegible] dress, [illegible] or thrown by fate [illegible] will always know how to avail herself of every possible advantage of nature and art. Nothing will be too trifling or too vast for her genius.

Adieu.—These gentlemen are so impatient, I must go. Burn the last page of this letter, and the whole of my next as soon as you have read it, I conjure my dear.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXIII.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

DEAR L——, Jan. 29, ——.

I HAVE time but to write one line to satisfy that philosophical curiosity, which, according to your injunctions, I will not denominate jealousy—except when I talk to myself.

You have a philosophical curiosity to know whether your wife will see the Prince in your absence. I saw his favourite yesterday, who complained to me, that his Highness had been absolutely refused admittance at your castle, notwithstanding he had made many ingenious and some bold attempts to see Lady Leonora L—— in the absence of her faithless husband.

As to your scheme of going to Russia you will be obliged, luckily, to wait some time for instructions, and in the interval it is to be hoped you will recover your senses. I shall see you as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LXIV.

Lady Leonora L——'s Woman to Mr. L——'s Swiss.

DEAR MONS. DE VAUD, Jan. 29, ——.

I HAVE received all your letters, and thank you for writing so often, and inquiring after my dear lady, and did expect no less from your good heart. I have no account to give you of her that can be pleasing. None but those that know my lady as well as I do could guess how much she grieves inwardly; for she keeps it all to herself: but I know that she does not sleep o'nights, and her fine spirits are gone, and her colour faded, except at times when she expects news from my master. With all this she is as gentle and sweet tempered as ever,

and she has as much thought and feeling as ever, even for the meanest creature about the place. She has clothed from head to foot the children of the poor woman you and I found lying, as we crossed the common that cold day, with a stone for her pillow. And my lady has had the old widow Clift's cottage new thatched; also she often goes to see your father, and stands speaking so kindly to him as he sits on the bench before his door, that, as he says, his spirits are raised for an hour after. A wicked heart that must be that could be ungrateful to my lady. But of that I say no more. Last night, as I was undressing of my lady, Susan, says she, with her sweet tone of voice that goes to one's soul—Susan, you are sorry, I believe, that de Vaud is gone with your master. A little I am, my lady, said I; but most of all I

wish, if it pleased God, that my master would come home again. My lady gave a sigh, but said nothing, and I was sorry I had said so much; but out of respect could not seem to notice her thoughts, so kept folding up her gown at the farthest end of the room, that she might not see I was crying. But I will think the best, and still I have a great hope that things will turn out right at last. The children are all well, and the little one growing every day liker to my master, and my lady every day fonder of him. I hope this next will be a boy, and who knows but his father may be home to see him. Write and say if there be any good news, or likelihood of any; and this is not only my desire, but the prayer of all in this house.

I am your constant

SUSAN MASON.

LETTER LXV.

Madame de P—— to Lady Olivia.

Paris.

As our vanity always endeavours to establish a balance between our own perfections and those of our friends, I must flatter myself, my dear Olivia, that in compensation for that courage and ardent imagination in which you are so much my superior, I possess some little advantages over you in my scientific hereditary knowledge of court intrigue, and of the arts of representation; all which will be necessary to you in your character of embassadress: you will in fact deserve this title, for of course you will govern the English embassador, whom you honour with your love. And

of course you will appear with splendour, and you will be particularly careful to have your *traineau* well appointed. Pray remember that one of your horses must gallop, whilst the other trots, or you are nobody. It will also be absolutely necessary to have a numerous retinue of servants, because this suits the Russian idea of magnificence. You must have, as the Russian nobles always had in Paris, four servants constantly to attend your equipage; one to carry the flambeau, another to open the door, and a couple to carry you into and out of your carriage. I beseech you to bear in mind perpetually, that you are to be as helpless as possible. A Frenchman of my acquaintance, who spent nine years in Russia, told me, that in his first setting out at Petersburg he was put on his guard in this particular by a speech of

his Russian valet de chambre :—" Sir, the Englishman you visited to day cannot be worthy of your acquaintance; he cannot be a gentleman. Son valet me dit qu'il se déshabille seul ! ! !"

I suppose you take Josephine with you; she will be an inestimable treasure: and I shall make it my business to send you the first advices of Paris fashions, which her talents will not fail to comprehend and execute. My charming Olivia! you will be the model of taste and elegance! Do not suspect that dress is carrying me away from politics. I assure you I know what I am about, and am going straight to my object. The art of attending to trifles is the art of governing the world, as all historians know, who have gone to the bottom of affairs. Was not the face of Europe changed by a dish of tea thrown on Mrs.

Masham's gown, as Voltaire with penetrating genius remarks? Women, without a doubt, understand the importance of trifles better than men do, and consequently always move in secret the slight springs of that vast machine, the civilized world. Is not your ambition roused, my Olivia? You must however lay aside a little of your romance, and not approach the political machine whilst you are intoxicated with love, else you will blunder infallibly, and do infinite and irreparable mischief to yourself and your friends.

Permit me to tell you, that you have been a little spoiled by sentimental novels, which are good only to talk of, when one must show sensibility, but destructive as rules of action. By the false lights which these writers, who know nothing of the world, have thrown

upon objects, you have been deluded; you have been led to mistake the means for the end. Love has been with you the sole end of love; whereas it ought to be the beginning of power. No matter for the past: the future is yours: at our age this future must be dexterously managed. A woman of spirit, and, what is better, of sense, must always take care that in her heart the age of love is not prolonged beyond the age of being beloved. In these times a woman has no choice at a certain period but politics, or bel esprit; for devotion, which used to be a resource, is no longer in fashion. We must all take a part, my dear; I assure you I have taken mine decidedly, and I predict that you will take yours with brilliant success. How often must one cry in the ears of lovers—Love must die! must die! must die! But you, my

dear Olivia, will not be deaf to the warning voice of common sense. Your own experience has on former occasions convinced you, that passion cannot be eternal; and at present, if I mistake not, there is in your love a certain mixture of other feelings, a certain alloy, which will make it happily ductile and manageable. When your triumph over the wife is complete, passion for the husband will insensibly decay; and this will be fortunate for you, because assuredly your embassador would not choose to remain all the rest of his days in love and in exile at Petersburg. All these English are afflicted with the maladie du pays; and, as you observe so well, the words home and wife have ridiculous but unconquerable power over their minds. What will become of you, my dear Olivia, when this Mr. L——

chooses to return to England to his castle, &c.? You could not accompany him. You must provide in time against this catastrophe, or you will be a deserted, disgraced, undone woman, my dear friend.

No one should begin to act a romance, who has not well considered the dénouement. It is a charming thing to mount with a friend in a balloon, amid crowds of spectators, who admire the fine spectacle, and applaud the courage of the aërostats; the losing sight of this earth, and the being in, or above the clouds, must also be delightful: but the moment will come when the travellers descend, and then begins the danger; then they differ about throwing out the ballast, the balloon is rent in the quarrel, it sinks with frightful rapidity, and they run the hazard, like the

poor Marquis d'Arlande, of being spitted upon the spire of the Invalides, or of being entangled among woods and briars—at last alighting upon the earth, our adventurers, fatigued and bruised, and disappointed, come out of their shattered triumphal car, exposed to the derision of the changeable multitude.

Every thing in this world is judged of by success. Your voyage to Petersburg, my dear Olivia, must not be a mere adventure of romance; as a party of pleasure it would be ridiculous; we must make something more of it. Enclosed is a letter to a Russian nobleman, an old lover of mine, who I understand is in favour. He will certainly be at your command. He is a man possessed by the desire of having reputation among foreigners, vain of the preference of our sex, generous even to pro-

digality. By his means you will be immediately placed on an easy footing with all the leading persons of the Russian court. You will go [illegible]om one step to another, till you a[illegible] the height which I have in view[illegible] Now for my grand object.—No, not now—for I have forty little notes about nothings to write this morning. Great things hang upon these nothings, so they should not be neglected. I must leave you, my amiable Olivia, and defer my grand object till to morrow.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

L TER LXVI.

Leonora Duchess of ——.

DEAR MOTHER, Feb. 2, ——.

THIS moment I have received a letter from my husband. He has accepted of an embassy to Petersburg. I cannot guess by the few lines he has written, whether or not he wishes that I should accompany him. Most ardently I wish it; but if my offer should be refused, or if it should be accepted only because it could not be well refused; if I should be a burthen, a restraint upon him, I should wish myself dead.

Perhaps he accepts of this embassy on purpose that he may leave me and take another person with him: or perhaps, dearest mother, (I hardly dare to hope

it)—perhaps he wishes to break off that connexion, and goes to Russia to leave temptation behind him. I know that this embassy was offered to him some weeks ago, and he had then no thoughts of accepting it.—O that I could see into his heart—that heart which used to be always open to me! If I could discover what his wishes are, I should know what mine ought to be. I have thoughts of going to town immediately to see him; at least I may take leave of him. Do you approve it? Write the moment you receive this: but I need not say that, for I am sure you will do so. Dearest mother, you have prophesied that his heart will return to me, and on this hope I live.

Your ever affectionate daughter,

LEONORA L——.

LETTER LXVII.

The Duchess of —— to Leonora.

Feb. 6, ——.

YES, my dear, I advise you by all means to go to town, and to see your husband. Your desire to accompany him to Russia he will know before you see him, for I have just written and dispatched an express to him with your last letter, and with all those which I have received from you within these last six months. Leave Mr. L—— time to read them before he sees you; and do not hurry or fatigue yourself unnecessarily. You know that an embassy cannot be arranged in two days; therefore travel by easy journies: you cannot do otherwise without hazard. Your cou-

rage in offering to undertake this long voyage with your husband is worthy of you, my beloved daughter. God bless and preserve you! If you go to Petersburg, I will see you before you leave England.

Your affectionate mother,

——.

LETTER LXVIII.

The Duchess of —— to Mr. L——.

Feb. 6, ——.

PERHAPS this letter may find you at the feet of your mistress. Spare me, Sir, a few moments from your pleasures. You may perhaps expect reproaches from the mother of your wife; but let me assure you, that you have none to apprehend. For my daughter's sake, if not for yours, I would forbear. Never was departing love recalled by the voice of reproach; you shall not hear it from me, you have not heard it from Leonora. But mistake not the cause of her forbearance; let it not be attributed to pusillanimity of temper, or insensibility of heart.

Enclosed I send you all the letters, which my daughter has written to me from the first day of her acquaintance with Lady Olivia to this hour. From these you will be enabled to judge of what she has felt for some months past, and of the actual state of her heart; you will see all the tenderness and all the strength of her soul.

It has ever been my fixed opinion, that a wife who loves her husband, and who has possessed his affections, may reclaim them from the lure of the most artful of her sex, by persevering kindness, temper, and good sense. Unless indeed her husband be a fool or a libertine. I have prophesied that my daughter will regain your heart; and upon this prophecy, to use her own expression, she lives. And even now, when its accomplishment seems far removed,

I am so steady in my opinion of her, and of you; so convinced of the necessary operation of certain causes, the uniform result of certain conduct upon the human mind, that undismayed I repeat my prophecy.

Were you to remain in this kingdom I should leave things to their natural course; I should not interfere so far even as to send you Leonora's letters: but as you may be separated for years, I think it necessary now to put into your hands incontrovertible proofs of what she is, and what she has been. Do not imagine that I am so weak as to expect that the perusal of these letters will work a sudden change: but it is fit, that before you leave England you should know that Leonora is not a cold, sullen, or offended wife; but one who loves you most tenderly, most

generously; who, concealing the agony of her heart, waits with resignation for the time when she will be your refuge, and the permanent blessing of your life.

——.

LETTER LXIX.

Madame de P—— to Olivia.

Paris.

AND now, my charming Olivia, raise your fine eyes as high as ambition can look, and you will perhaps discover my grand object. You do not see it yet. Look again.—Do you not see the Emperor of Russia? What would you think of him for a lover? If it were only for novelty's sake, it would really be pleasant to have a Czar at one's feet. Reign in his heart, and you in fact seat yourself invisibly on the throne of all the Russias: thence what a commanding prospect you have of the affairs of Europe! and how we should govern the world at our ease. The

project is bold, but not impracticable. The ancients represent Cupid riding the Numidian lion, and why should he not tame the Russian bear? It would make a pretty design for a vignette. I can engrave as well as la Pompadour could at least, and anticipating your victory, my charming Olivia, I will engrave Cupid leading the bear in a chain of flowers. This shall be my seal. Mon cachet de faveur. Rousseau, you know, had un cachet de faveur, and un cachet de disgrace.

Courage, my fair politician! You have a difficult task; but the glory is in proportion to the labour; and those who value power properly, are paid by its acquisition for all possible fatigue and hardships. With your knowledge of our modes, you will be at Petersburg the arbitress of delights. You have a

charming taste and invention for fêtes and spectacles. Teach these people to vary their pleasures. Their monarch must adore you, if you banish from his presence that most dreadful enemy of kings, and most obstinate resident at courts, *ennui*. Trust, my Olivia, neither to your wit, nor your beauty, nor your accomplishments, but employ your "various arts of trifling prettily," and take my word for it you will succeed.

As I may not have an opportunity of sending you another private letter, and as lemon-juice, goulard, and all those sympathetic inks, are subject to unlucky accidents, I must send you all my secret instructions by the present safe conveyance.

You must absolutely sacrifice, my dear child, all your romantic notions, and all your taste for love, to the grand

object. The Czar must not have the slightest cause for jealousy. These Czars make nothing, you know, of cutting off their mistresses' pretty heads upon the bare suspicion of an intrigue. But you must do what is still more difficult than to be constant, you must yield your will, and, what is more, you must never let this Czar guess that his will is not always your pleasure. Your humour, your tastes, your wishes, must be incessantly and with alacrity sacrificed to his. You must submit to the constraint of eternal court ceremony and court dissimulation. You must bear to be surrounded with masks, instead of the human face divine; and instead of fellow-creatures, you must content yourself with puppets. You will have the amusement of pulling the wires: but remember that you must wear a mask perpetually

as well as others, and never attempt to speak, and never expect to hear, the language of truth or of the heart. You must not be the dupe of attachment in those, who call themselves friends, or zealous and affectionate servants, &c. &c. You must have sufficient strength of character to bear continually in mind, that all these professions are mere words, that all these people are alike false, and actuated but by one motive, self-interest. To secure yourself from secret and open enemies, you must farther have sufficient courage to live without a friend or a confidante, for such persons at court are only spies, traitors in the worst forms. All this is melancholy and provoking, to be sure; but all this you must see without feeling, or at least without showing a spark of indignation. A sentimental misanthropist, male or fe-

male, is quite out of place at court. You must see all that is odious and despicable in human nature in a comic point of view; and you must consider your fellow-creatures as objects to be laughed at, not to be hated. Laughter, besides, being good for the health, and consequently for the complexion, always implies superiority. Without this gratification to our vanity there would be no possibility of enduring that eternal penance of hypocrisy, and that solitary state of suspicion, to which the ambitious condemn themselves. I fear, my romantic Olivia, that you who are a person used to yield to first impressions, and not quite accustomed to subdue your passions to your interest, will think that politics require too much from you, almost as much as constancy or religion. But consider the difference! for Heaven's

sake, my dear, consider the greatness of our object! Would to God that I had the eloquence of Bossuet, and I would make you a convert from love and a proselyte to glory. Dare, my Olivia, to be a martyr to ambition!—See! already high in air she holds a crown over your head—it is almost within your grasp—stretch out your white arm and seize it—fear not the thorns!—every crown has thorns—but who upon that account ever yet refused one? My dear Empress, I have the honour to kiss your powerful hands.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXX.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 9, ——.

YOU need not hurry yourself to come to town on my account, for by this change of ministry my embassy will be delayed some weeks.

A few days ago this delay would have been a terrible disappointment to me, yet now I feel it a respite. A respite! you will exclaim; yes, my dear friend—so it is.—Such is the heart of man!—so changeable, so contradictory, so much at variance with itself from day to day, from hour to hour. Tacitus, I think, remarks, that "Princes are apt to will contradictories." I believe, from what I now feel, that every man under the

dominion of passion is reduced to the same absurd and miserable condition.—I have just been reading some letters from Leonora, which have wrung my very heart; letters addressed to her mother, laying open every feeling of her mind for some months. My dear friend, what injustice have I done to this admirable woman! With what tenderness, with what delicacy has she loved me! while I, mistaking modesty for coldness, fortitude for indifference, have neglected, injured, and abandoned her! With what sweetness of temper, with what persevering goodness has she borne with me, while intoxicated with passion I saw every thing in a false point of view! How often have I satisfied myself with the persuasion, that she scarcely observed my attachment to Olivia, or beheld it unconcerned, secure by the absence of

love from the pangs of jealousy. How often have I accused her of insensibility whilst her heart was in tortures! Olivia was deceived also, and confirmed me in this cruel error. And all that time Leonora was defending her rival, and pleading her cause! With what generosity, with what magnanimity she speaks of Olivia in these letters! Her confidence was unbounded, her soul above suspicion; to the very last she doubted and blamed herself; dear amiable woman! blamed herself for our faults, for feeling that jealousy, which no wife who loved as she did could possibly subdue. She never betrayed it by a single word or look of reproach. Even though she fainted, at that cursed fête champêtre, yet the moment she came to her senses, she managed so that none of the spectators could suspect she thought Olivia was

her rival. My dear General, you will forgive me—as long as I praise Leonora you will understand me. At last you will acknowledge that I do justiee to the merits of my wife. Justice!—no—I am unworthy of her. I have no heart like hers to offer in return for such love. She wishes to go with me to Petersburg; she has forborne to make this offer directly to me; but I know it from her last letter to her mother, which now lies before me. How can I refuse?—and how can I accept? My soul is torn with violence different ways. How can I leave Leonora! and how can I tear myself from Olivia!—Even if her charms had no power over my heart, how could I with honour desert the woman who has sacrificed every thing for me! I will not shield myself from you, my friend, behind the word honour. See me as you have

always seen me, without disguise, and now without defence. I respect, I love Leonora—but, alas! I am in love with Olivia!

Yours ever,

F. L.

LETTER LXXI.

Mr. L—— to Olivia.

Feb. 14, ——.

TRIUMPHANT as you are over my heart, dear enchanting Olivia! you cannot make me false. I cannot, even to appease your anger, deny his morning what I said last night. It is inconsistent with all your professions, with your character, with your generous disposition, to desire me to "*abjure Leonora for ever!*" it would be to render myself for ever unworthy of Olivia. I am convinced, that had you read the letters of which I spoke, you would have been touched, you would have been struck by them as I was: instead of being hurt and displeased by

the impression that they made upon me, you would have sympathised in my feelings, you would have been indignant if I had not admired, you would have detested and despised me if I could have been insensible to "*so much goodness and generosity.*" I repeat my words, Olivia, I will not "*retract,*" I cannot "*repent of them.*" My dear Olivia! when you reflect upon what is past, I am persuaded you will acknowledge, that your sensibility made you unjust. Indeed, my love, you did not show your usual candour; I had just read all that Leonora had written of you, all that she had urged against her mother in your defence; even when she had most cause to be irritated against us; I could not avoid being shocked by the different manner in which you spoke of her. Perhaps I told you so too ab-

ruptly—if I had loved you less I should have been more cautious and more calm —if I had esteemed you less, calmer still. I could then, possibly, have borne to hear you speak in a manner unbecoming yourself. Forgive me the pain I gave you—the pain I now give you, my dearest Olivia! My sincerity is the best security you can have for my future love. Banish therefore this unjust, this causeless jealousy; moderate this excessive sensibility for both our sakes, and depend upon the power you have over my heart. You cannot conceive how much I have felt from this misunderstanding—the first we have ever had. Let it be the last. I have spent a sleepless night. I am detained in town by provoking, tiresome, but necessary business. Meet me in the evening with smiles, my Olivia: let me

behold in those fascinating eyes their wonted expression, and hear from your voice its usual, its natural tone of tenderness and love.

Ever devotedly yours,

F. L.

LETTER LXXII.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Feb. 14, ——.

YOU have spoken daggers to me! Come not to Richmond this evening! I cannot—will not see you! Not for the universe would I see you with my present feelings!

Write to me more letters like that which I have just received. Dip your pen in gall, find words more bitter than those which you have already used. Accuse me of want of candour, want of generosity, want of every amiable, every estimable quality. Upbraid me with the loss of what you have bereft me. Recollect every sacrifice that I have made, and, if you can, imagine every

sacrifice that I would still make for you—peace of mind, friends, country, fortune, fame, virtue; name them all, and triumph—and disdain your triumph! Remind me how low I am fallen—sink me lower still—insult, debase, humble me to the dust. Exalt my rival, unroll to my aching eyes the emblazoned catalogue of her merits, her claims to your esteem, your affection; number them over, dwell upon those that I have forfeited, those which can never be regained; tell me that such merits are above all price; assure me that beyond all her sex you respect, you admire, you love your wife; say it with enthusiasm, with fire in your eyes, with all the energy of passion in your voice; then bid me sympathise in your feelings—bid me banish jealousy—wonder at my alarm—call my sorrow anger—conjure me to restrain my sensi-

bility. Restrain my sensibility! Unhappy Olivia! he is tired of your love. Let him then at once tell me the dreadful truth, and I will bear it. Any evil is better than uncertainty, than lingering hope. Drive all hope from my mind. Bid me despair and die—but do not stretch me on the rack of jealousy!—Yet if such be your cruel pleasure, enjoy it.—Determine how much I can endure and live. Stop just at the point when human nature sinks, that you may not lose your victim, that she may linger on from day to day, your sport and your derision.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXIII.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

MY DEAR GENERAL, Feb. 16, ——.

YOU will rejoice to hear that Olivia and I have been in a state of warfare for some days past, and you will be still more pleased when you learn the cause of our quarrel. On the day that I had been reading Leonora's letters I was rather later at Richmond than usual. Olivia, offended, insisted upon knowing by what I could possibly have been detained. Her anger knew no bounds when she heard the truth. She made use of some expressions, in speaking of my wife, which I could not, I hope, have borne at any

time, but which shocked me beyond measure at that moment. I defended Leonora with warmth. Olivia in a scornful tone talked of my wife's coldness of disposition, and bid me compare Lady Leonora's love with hers. It was a comparison I had it more in my power to make than Olivia was aware of; it was the most disadvantageous moment for her in which that comparison could be made. She saw or suspected my feelings, and perceived that all she had said of my Leonora's *incapability of loving*, produced an effect directly contrary to her expectations. Transported by jealousy, she then threw out hints respecting the Prince. I spoke as I felt, indignantly. I know not precisely what I said, but Olivia and I parted in anger. I have since received a pas-

sionate and fond note from her. But I feel unhappy. Dear General, when will you come to town?

Yours truly,

F. L.

LETTER LXXIV.

Mrs. C—— to the Duchess of ——.

MY DEAR MADAM, Feb. 17, ——.

YOUR Grace's cautions and entreaties to Lady Leonora not to over-exert and fatigue herself were, alas! as ineffectual as mine. From the time she heard that Mr. L—— had accepted this embassy to Petersburg, she was so eager to set out on her journey to town, and so impatient to see him, that neither her mind nor her body had one moment's tranquillity. She waited with indescribable anxiety for your Grace's answer to her letter; and the instant she was secure of your approbation, her carriage was ordered to

the door. I saw that she was ill; but she would not listen to my fears; she repeated with triumph, that her mother made no objection to her journey, and that she had no apprehensions for herself. However, she was obliged at last to yield. The carriage was actually at the door, when she was forced to submit to be carried to her bed. For several hours she was in such danger, that I never expected she could live till this day. Thank God! she is now safe. Her infant, to her great delight, is a boy: she was extremely anxious to have a son, because Mr. L—— formerly wished for one so much. She forbids me to write to Mr. L——, lest I should communicate the account of her *sudden illness* too abruptly.

She particularly requests that your Grace will mention to him this *accident*

in the least alarming manner possible. Your Grace shall hear from me again next post. Lady Leonora has now fallen asleep, and seems to sleep quietly. Who should sleep in peace if she cannot! I never saw her equal.

My dear Madam,

I am,

With respect and attachment,

Your Grace's

Sincerely affectionate

HELEN C——.

It is with extreme concern I am forced to add, that since I wrote this letter the child has been so ill that I have fears for his life.—His poor mother!

LETTER LXXV.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

Feb. 21, ——.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

ALL is upon velvet again. Poor Olivia was excessively hurt by my letter: she was ill for two days—seriously ill, as Josephine assures me. Yesterday I at length obtained admittance. Olivia was all softness, all candour: she acknowledged that she had been wrong, and in so sweet a voice! She blamed herself, till I could no longer think her blamable. She seemed so much humbled and depressed, such a tender melancholy appeared in her bewitching eyes, that I could not resist the fascination. I cer-

tainly gave her some cause for displeasure that unfortunate evening; for as Olivia has strong passions and exquisite sensibility, I should not have been so abrupt. A fit of jealousy may seize the best and most generous mind, and may prompt to what it would be incapable of saying or thinking in dispassionate moments. I am sure that Olivia has, upon reflection, felt more pain from this affair than I have. My Russian embassy is still in *abeyance.* Ministers seem to know their own minds as little as I know mine. Ambition has its quarrels and follies as well as love. At all events I shall not leave England till next month; and I shall not go down to L—— Castle till I have received my last instructions from our court, and till the day for my sailing is fixed. The parting with Leonora will be a dread-

ful difficulty. I cannot think of it steadily. But as she herself says, "is not better that she should lose a year of my affections than a life?" The Duchess is mistaken in imagining it possible that any woman, let her influence be ever so great over my heart, could prejudice me against my amiable, my admirable wife. What has just passed between Olivia and me convinces me that it is impossible. She has too much knowledge of my character to hazard in future a similar attempt. No, my dear friend, be assured that I would not suffer it. I have not yet lost all title to your esteem or to my own. This enchantress may intoxicate me with her cup, but shall never degrade me; and I should feel myself less degraded even by losing the human form, than by forfeiting that

principle of honour and virtue, which more nobly distinguishes man from brute.

Yours most sincerely,

F. L.

LETTER LXXVI.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 23, ——.

IT is well that I did not answer your letter of Saturday before I received that of Monday. My congratulations upon your quarrel with your fair one might have come just as you were kissing hands upon a reconciliation.

I have often found a great convenience in writing a bad hand: my letters are so little like what they are intended for, and have among them such an equality of unintelligibility, that each seems either; and with the slightest alteration, each will stand and serve for the other. My *m*, *n*, and *u*, are con-

vertible letters; so are the terms propositions of your present mod reasoning, my dear L——, and I perceive that you find your account in it. Upon this I congratulate you; and I congratulate my Lady Leonora upon your being detained some weeks longer in England. Those who have a just cause need never pray for victory; they need only ask the gods for time. Time always brings victory to truth, and shame to falsehood. But you are not worthy of such fine apothegms. At present "You are not fit to hear yourself convinced." I will wait for a better opportunity, and have patience with you, if I can.

You seem to plume yourself mightily upon your *resolve* to do justice to the merits of your wife, and upon the courage you have shown in stuffing cotton into

your ears to prevent your listening to the voice of the Syren: but pray take the cotton out, and hear all she can say or sing. Lady Leonora cannot be hurt by any thing Olivia can say, but her own malice may destroy herself.

In the mean time, as you tell me that you are upon velvet again, I am to presume that you are perfectly at ease; and I should be obliged to you, if, as often as you can find leisure, you would send me bulletins of your happiness. I have never yet been in love with one of these high-flown heroines, and I am really curious to know what degree of felicity they can bestow upon a man of common sense. I should be glad to profit by the experience of a friend.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LXXVII.

Olivia to Madame de P——.

Richmond.

ACCEPT my sincere thanks, inimitable Gabrielle! for having taken off my hands a lover, who really had half wearied me to death. If you had dealt more frankly with me I could however have saved you much superfluous trouble and artifice. I now perfectly comprehend the cause of poor R***'s strange silence some months ago; he was then under the influence of your charms, and it was your pleasure to deceive me even when there was no necessity for dissimulation. You knew the secret of my growing attachment to L——, and must have foreseen that R*** would be burthensome to me.

You needed therefore only to have treated me with candour, and you would have gained a lover without losing a friend: but Madame de P—— is too accomplished a politician to go the simple straight road to her object. I now perfectly comprehend why she took such pains to persuade me that an imperial lover was alone worthy of my charms. She was alarmed by an imaginary danger. Believe me, I am incapable of disputing with any one *les restes d'un cœur*.

Permit me to assure you, Madam, that your incomparable talents for explanation will be utterly thrown away upon me in future. I am in possession of the whole truth, from a person whose information I cannot doubt: I know the precise date of the commencement of your connexion with R***, so that

you must perceive it will be impracticable to make me believe that you have not betrayed my easy confidence.

I cannot however, without those pangs of sentiment which your heart will never experience, reflect upon the treachery, the perfidy of one, who has been my bosom friend.—Return my letters, Gabrielle.—With this you will receive certain *souvenirs*, at which I could never henceforward look without sighing. I return you that ring I have so long worn with delight, the picture of that treacherous eye*, which you know so well how to use.—Adieu, Gabrielle.—The illusion is over.—How many of the illusions of my fond heart have been dispelled by time and treachery!

OLIVIA.

* Certain Ladies at this time carried pictures of the eyes of their favourites.

LETTER LXXVIII.

*Madame de P—— to Monsieur R***.*

Paris, — 18, ——.

I HAVE just received the most extravagant letter imaginable from your Olivia. Really you may congratulate yourself, my dear friend, upon having recovered your liberty. 'Twere better to be a galley-slave at once, than to be bound to please a woman for life, who knows not what she would have either in love or friendship. Can you conceive any thing so absurd as her upbraiding me with treachery, because I know the value of a heart of which she tells me she was more than half tired; as if I were to blame for her falling in love with Mr. L——, and as if I did not know the

whole progress of her inconstancy. Her letters to me give a new history of the birth and education of Love. Here we see Love born of Envy, nursed by *Ennui*, and dandled in turn by all the vices.

And my Lady Olivia fancies that she is a perfect French woman! There is nothing we Parisians abhor and ridicule so much as these foreign, and always awkward, caricatures of our manners. With us there are many who, according to a delicate distinction, lose their virtue without losing their taste for virtue; but I flatter myself there are few who resemble Olivia entirely; who have neither the virtues of a man nor of a woman. One cannot even say, that "her head is the dupe of her heart," since she has no heart. But enough of such a tiresome and incomprehensible subject.

How I overvalued that head, when I thou[illegible]t it could ever be fit for politics. ** [illegible]d we did not commit ourselves. [illegible] see how prudent I am, my dear [illegible]**, and how much those are mistaken, who think that we women are not fit to be trusted with secrets of state. Love and politics make the best mixture in the world. Adieu. Victoire summons me to my toilette.

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXXIX.

Madame de P—— to Lady Olivia.

Paris, — 18, ——.

REALLY, my dear Olivia, this is too childish. What! make a complaint in form against me for taking a lover off your hands when you did not know what to do with him! Do you quarrel in England every time you change partners in a country dance? But I must be serious; for the high sounding words *treachery* and *perfidy* are surely sufficient to make any body grave. Seriously then, if you are resolved to be tragical, *et de me faire une scène*, I must submit—console myself, and, above all things, take care not to be ridiculous.

Your letters, as you desire it so ear-

nestly, and with so much reason, shall be returned by the first safe conveyance; but excuse me if I forbear to restore your *souvenirs*. With us Parisians this returning of keepsakes has been out of fashion since the days of Molière and *Le dépit amoureux*.

Adieu, my charming Olivia! I was going to say, I embrace you tenderly; but I believe, according to your English etiquette, I must now conclude with

I have the honor to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

GABRIELLE DE P——.

LETTER LXXX.

From Olivia to Mr. L——.

Tuesday Morn.

COME not to Richmond to day; I am not in spirits to see you, my dearest L——. Allow me to indulge my melancholy retired from every human eye.

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXXI.

From Lady Olivia to Mr. L——.

Tuesday Evening.

"EXPLAIN to you the cause of my melancholy."—Vain request!—cruel as vain! Your ignorance of the cause too well justifies my sad presentiments. Were our feelings in unison, as once they were, would not every chord of your heart vibrate responsively to mine?

With me love is an absorbing vortex of the soul, into which all other thoughts, feelings, and ideas are irresistibly impelled; with you it is but as the stranger stream that crosses the peaceful lake, and as it flows wakens only the surface of the slumbering waters, communicating to them but a tem-

porary agitation. With you, my dear, but too tranquil minded friend, love is but one amid the vulgar crowd of pleasures; it concentrates not your ideas, it entrances not your faculties; it is not, as in my heart, the supreme delight, which renders all others tasteless, the only blessing which can make life supportable, the sole, sufficient object of existence. Alas! how cruelly different is the feeble attachment that I have inspired from that all powerful sentiment to which I live a victim! Countless symptoms, by you unheeded, mark to my love-watchful eye the decline of passion. How often am I secretly shocked by the cold carelessness of your words, and manner! How often does the sigh burst from my bosom, the tear fall from my eye, when you have left me at leisure to recal, by memory's torturing power, in-

stances of your increasing indifference! Seek not to calm my too well founded fears. Professions, with all their unmeaning inanimate formality, but irritate my anguish. Permit me to indulge, to feed upon my grief in silence. Ask me no more to explain to you the cause of my melancholy. Too plainly, alas! I feel it is beyond my utmost power to endure it. Amiable Werter! dear St. Preux! you would sympathise in my feelings! Sublime Goethe! all-eloquent Rousseau! you alone could feel as I do, and you alone could paint my anguish.

The miserable
OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXXII.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

March 1, ——.

EXPECT no bulletin of happiness from me, my friend. I find it impossible to make Olivia reasonable. She has superior talent[illegible] accomplishments, beauty, grace, all [illegible] can attract and fascinate the human heart—that could triumph over every feeling, every principle that opposed her power—she lives with the man she loves, and yet she is miserable.

Rousseau, it has been said, never really loved any woman but his own Julie; I have lately been tempted to think, that Olivia never really loved any man but St. Preux. Werter, perhaps, and some other German heroes,

might dispute her heart even with St. Preux: but as for me, I begin to be aware, that I am loved only as a feeble resemblance of those divine originals (to whom, however, my character bears not the slightest similarity,) and I am often indirectly, and sometimes directly reproached with my inferiority to imaginary models. But how can a plain Englishman hope to reach

"The high sublime of deep absurd?"

I am continually reviled for not using a romantic language, which I have never learned; and which, as far as I can judge, is foreign to all natural feeling. I wish to make Olivia happy. There is nothing I would not do to satisfy her of my sincerity, but nothing I can do will suffice. She has a sort of morbid sensibility, which is more alive to pain

than pleasure, more susceptible of jealousy than of love. No terms are sufficiently strong to convince her of my affection, but an unguarded word makes her miserable for hours. She requires to be agitated by violent emotions, though they exhaust her mind, and leave her spiritless and discontented. In this alternation of rapture and despair all her time passes. As she says of herself, she has no soul but for love: she seems to think it a crime against sentiment to admit of relief from common occupations or indifferent subjects; with a sort of superstitious zeal she excludes all thoughts but those which relate to one object, and in this spirit of amorous mysticism she actually makes a penance even of love. I am astonished that her heart can endure this variety of self-inflicted torments. What will become

of Olivia when she ceases to love and to be loved? And what passion can be durable which is so violent as hers, and to which no respite is allowed? No affection can sustain these hourly trials of suspicion and reproach.

Jealousy of Leonora has taken such possession of Olivia's imagination, that she misinterprets all my words and actions. By restraining my thoughts, by throwing obstacles in the way of my affection for my wife, she stimulates and increases it: she forces upon me continually those comparisons which she dreads. Till I knew Olivia more intimately than the common forms of a first acquaintance, or the illusions of a treacherous passion permitted, her defects did not appear; but now that I suffer, and that I see her suffer daily, I deplore them bitterly. Her happiness rests

and weighs heavily on my honour. I feel myself bound to consider and to provide for the happiness of the woman, who has sacrificed to me all independent means of felicity. A man without honour or humanity may perhaps finish an intrigue as easily as he can begin it, but this is not exactly the case of your imprudent friend,

F. L.

LETTER LXXXIII.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

March 3, ——.

AY, ay! just as I thought it would be. This is all the comfort, my dear friend, that I can give you; all the comfort that wise people usually afford their friends in distress. Provided things happen just as they predicted, they care but little what is suffered in the accomplishment of their prophecies. But seriously, my dear L——, I am not sorry that you are in a course of vexation. The more you see of your charmer the better. Sh[illegible]ll allay your intoxication by gentle [illegible]rees, and send you sober home. Pray keep in the course you have begun, and preserve your patience as long as possible. I should be sorry

that you and Olivia quarrelled violently and parted in a passion: such quarrels of lovers are proverbially the renewal of love.

"Il faut délier l'amitié, il faut couper l'amour."

In some cases this maxim may be just, but not in the present instance. I would rather wait till the knot is untied, than cut it; for when once you see the art with which it was woven, a similar knot can never again perplex you.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER LXXXIV.

From Olivia to Mr. L——.

Richmond, Saturday.

YOU presume too much upon your power over my heart, [illegible] pon the softness of my nature. [illegible] ow that I have spirit as well as tenderness—a spirit that will neither be injured nor insulted with impunity. You were amazed, you say, by the violence which I showed yesterday. Why did you provoke that violence, by opposing the warmest wish of my heart? and with a calmness that excited my tenfold indignation! Imagine not that I am a tame subjugated female, to be treated with neglect if I remonstrate, and caressed as the price of obedience. Fancy not that I am one of

your chimney-corner, household goddesses, doomed to the dull uniformity of domestic worship, destined to be adored, to be hung with garlands, or undeified or degraded with indignity! I have been accustomed to a different species of worship; and the fondness of my weak heart has not yet su[illegible]o low, and rendered me so abject, [illegible] cannot assert my rights. You tell me, that you are unconscious of giving me any just cause of offence. Just cause!—How I hate the cold accuracy of your words! This single expression is sufficient offence to a heart like mine. You entreat me to be reasonable. Reasonable!—Did ever man talk of reason to a woman he loved? When once a man has recourse to reason and precision, there is an end of love. No just cause of offence!—What, have I not cause to be indignant, when I find

you thus trifle with my feelings, postpone from week to week, and month to month, our departure from this hateful country.

> "Bid me hope on from day to day,
> And wish and wish my soul away."

Yes, you know it to be the most ardent wish of my soul to leave England; you know that I cannot enjoy a moment's peace of mind whilst I am here; yet in this racking suspense it is your pleasure to detain me. No, it shall not be—this shall not go on!—It is in vain you tell me, that the delay originates not with you, that you must wait for instructions, and I know not what. Paltry diplomatic excuses!

OLIVIA.

LETTER LXXXV.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

March 6, ——.

AMUSE yourself, my good General, at my expense: I know that you are seriously interested for my happiness; but the way is not quite so clear before me as you imagine. It is extremely easy to be philosophic for our friends; but difficult to be so for ourselves when our passions are concerned. Indeed this would be a contradiction in terms; you might as well talk of a cold sun, or of hot ice, as of a philosopher falling in love, or of a man in love being a philosopher. You say that Olivia will wear out my passion, and that her defects will undo the work of

her charms. I acknowledge that she sometimes ravels the web she has woven; but she is miraculously expeditious and skilful in repairing the mischief: the magical tissue again appears firm as ever, glowing with brighter colours, and exhibiting finer forms.

In plain prose, my dear friend; for as you are not in love, you will find it difficult to follow my poetic flights; in plain prose, I must confess that Olivia has the power to charm and touch my heart even after she has provoked me to the utmost verge of human patience. She knows her power, and I am afraid this tempts her to abuse it. Her temper, which formerly appeared to me all feminine gentleness, is now irritable and violent; but I am persuaded, that this is not her natural disposition; it is the effect of her present unhappy state

of mind. Tortured by remorse and jealousy, if in the height of their paroxysms Olivia make me suffer from their fury, is it for me to complain? I who caused, should at least endure the evil.

Every thing is arranged for my embassy, and the day is fixed for our leaving England. I go down to L—— Castle next week.

Your faithful

F. L.

LETTER LXXXVI.

Josephine to Victoire, Madame de P——'s Woman.

Richmond, March 6, ——.

I AM in despair, dear Victoire; and unless your genius can assist me, absolutely undone. Here is this romantic lady of mine determined upon a journey to Russia with her new English lover. What whims ladies take into their heads, and how impossible it is to make them understand reason. I have been labouring, in vain, to convince my Lady Olivia that this is the most absurd scheme imaginable: and I have repeated to her all I learnt from Lady F——'s women, who are just returned from Petersburg, and whom I met at a party last night, all

declaring they would rather die a thousand deaths than go through again what they have endured. Such seas of ice! such going in sledges! such barbarians! such beds! and scarcely a looking-glass! And nothing fit to wear but what one carries with one, and God knows how long we may stay. At Petersburg the coachmen's ears are frozen off every night on their boxes waiting for their ladies. And there are bears and wild beasts, I am told, howling with their mouths wide open night and day in the forests which we are to pass through; and even in the towns the men, I hear, are little better, for it is the law of the country for the men to beat their wives, and many wear long beards. How horrid!—My Lady F——'s woman, who is a Parisian born, and very pretty, if her eyes were not so small, and better dressed than her lady

always, except diamonds, assures me upon her honour, she never had a civil thing said to her whilst she was in Russia, except by one or two Frenchmen in the suite of the embassadors.

These Russians think of nothing but drinking brandy, and they put pepper into it! Mon Dieu, what savages! Put pepper into Brandy! But that is inconceivable! Positively I will never go to Petersburg. And yet if my Lady goes, what will become of me? for you know my sentiments for Brunel, and he is decided to accompany my Lady, so I cannot stay behind.

But absolutely I am shocked at this intrigue with Mr. L——, and my conscience reproaches me terribly with being a party concerned in it; for in this country an affair of gallantry between married people is not so light a thing as

with us. Here wives sometimes love their husbands seriously, as if they were their lovers; and my Lady Leonora L—— is one of this sort of wives. She is very unhappy, I am told. One day at L—— Castle, I assure you my heart quite bled for her, when she gave me a beautiful gown of English muslin, little suspecting me then to be her enemy. She is certainly very unsuspicious and very amiable, and I wish to Heaven her husband would think as I do, and take her with him to Petersburg instead of carrying off my Lady Olivia and me! Adieu, mon chat! Embrace every body I know tenderly for me.

JOSEPHINE.

LETTER LXXXVII.

Mrs. C—— to the Duchess of ——.

MY DEAR MADAM, March 7, ——.

I BELIEVE, when I wrote last to your Grace, I said, that I had no hopes of the child's life. From the moment of his birth there was but little probability of his being any thing but a source of misery to his mother. I cannot, on her account, regret that the struggle is over. He expired this morning. My poor friend had hopes to the last, though I had none; and it was most painful and alarming to see the feverish anxiety with which she watched over her little boy, frequently repeating, "Mr. L—— used to wish so much for a son—I hope the boy will live to see his father."

Last night, partly by persuasion, partly by compulsion, I prevailed with her to let the child be taken out of her room. This morning, as soon as it was light, I heard her bell ring; the poor little thing was at that moment in convulsions; and knowing that Lady Leonora rang to inquire for it, I went to prepare her mind for what I knew must be the event. The moment I came into the room she looked eagerly in my face, but did not ask me any questions about the child. I sat down by the side of her bed; but without listening to what I said about her own health, she rang her bell again more violently than before. Susan came in. Susan!—without my child!—said she, starting up. Susan hesitated, but I saw by her countenance that it was all over—so did Lady Leonora. She said not a word,

but drawing her curtain suddenly, she lay down, and never spoke or stirred for three hours. The first words she said afterwards were to me.

"You need not move so softly, my dear Helen, I am not asleep. Have you my mother's last letter? I think my mother says that she will be here to morrow? She is very kind to come to me. Will you be so good as to write to her immediately, and send a servant with your letter as soon as you can to meet her on the road, that she may not be *surprised* when she arrives."

Lady Leonora is now more composed and more like herself than she has been for some time past. I rejoice that your Grace will so soon be here, because you will be her best possible consolation; and I do not know any other person in the world who could have suf-

ficient influence, to prevent her from attempting to set out upon a journey before she can travel with safety. To do her justice, she has not hinted that such were her intentions; but still I know her mind so well, that I am certain what her thoughts are, and what her actions would be. Most ladies talk more than they act, but Leonora acts more decidedly than she talks.

Believe me, dear Madam,
With much respect,
Your Grace's
Sincerely affectionate
HELEN C——.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

Mr. L—— to General B——.

March 12, ——.

I THANK you, my excellent friend, for the kindness of your last letter*, which came to me at the ti[illegible] I wanted it most. In the whole course of my life I never felt so much self-reproach as I have done since I heard of the illness of Leonora and the loss of my son. From this blow my mind will not easily recover. Of all torments self-reproach is the worst. And even now I cannot follow the dictates of my own heart and of my better judgment.

In Olivia's company I am compelled

* This letter does not appear.

to repress my feelings; she cannot sympathize in them; they offend her: she is dissatisfied even with my silence, and complains of my being out of spirits. Out of spirits!—How can I be otherwise at present? Has Olivia no touch of pity for a woman, who was once her friend, who always treated her with generous kindnes[illegible] But perhaps I am unreasonable, and expect too much from female nature.

At all events, I wish that Olivia would spare me at this moment her sentimental metaphysics. She is for ever attempting to prove to me that I cannot love so well as she can. I admit that I cannot talk of love so finely. I hope all this will not go on when we arrive at Petersburg.

The ministry at last know their own

minds. I saw —— to day, and every thing will be quickly arranged; therefore, my dear friend, do not delay coming to town, to

Your obliged

F. L.

LETTER LXXXIX.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

March 14, ——.

PERHAPS you are a little unreasonable! Indeed, my dear friend, I do not think you a little unreasonable, but very nearly stark mad. What! quarrel with your mistress because she is not sorry that your wife is ill, and because she cannot sympathize in your grief for the loss of your son! Where, except perhaps in ab- novels, did you ever meet with these ...agons of mistresses, who were so magnanimous and so generous as to sacrifice their own reputations, and then be satisfied to share the only possible good remaining to them in life, the heart of their lover, with a rival more estimable,

more amiable than themselves, and who has the advantage of being a wife? This sharing of hearts, this union of souls, with this opposition of interests, this metaphysical gallantry is absolute nonsense, and all who try it in real life will find it so to their cost. Why should you, my dear L——, expect such superlative excellence from your Olivia? Do you think, that a woman by losing one virtue increases the strength of those that remain, as it is said that the loss of one of our senses renders all the others more acute? Do you think that a lady, by yielding to love, and by proving that she has not sufficient resolution or forbearance to preserve the honour of her sex, gives the best possible demonstration of her having sufficient strength of character to rise superior to all the other weaknesses inci-

dent to human, and more especially to female nature—envy and jealousy for instance?

No, no, my good friend, you have common sense, though you lately have been sparing of it in action. You had a wife, and a good wife, and you had some chance of being happy; but with a wife and a mistress, granting them to be both the best of their kind, the probabilities are rather against you. I speak only as a man of the world; morality you know is now merely an affair of calculation. According to the most approved tables of happiness, you have made a bad bargain. But be just, at any rate, and do not blame your Olivia for the inconveniences and evils inseparable from the species of connexion that you have been pleased to form. Do you expect the whole course of society and

the nature of the human heart to change for your special accommodation? Do you believe in truth by wholesale, and yet in detail expect a happy exception in your own favour?—Seriously, my dear friend, you must either break off this connexion or bear it. I shall see you in a few days.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XC.

Mrs. C—— to Miss B——.

March 15, ——.

LEONORA has recovered her strength surprisingly. She was so determined to be well, that her body dared not contradict her mind. Her excellent mother has been of the greatest possible service to us, for she has had sufficient influence to prevent her daughter from exerting herself too much. Her Grace had a letter from Mr. L—— to day—very short, but very kind—at least all that I heard read of it. He has set my heart somewhat more at ease by the comfortable assurance, that he will not leave England without seeing Lady Leonora. I have the greatest hopes from this interview!

I have not felt so happy for many months—but I will not be too sanguine. Mr. L—— talks of being here the latter end of this month. The Duchess, with her usual prudence, intends to leave her daughter before that time, lest Mr. L—— should be constrained by her presence, or should imagine that Leonora acts from any impulse but that of her own heart. I also, though much against my inclinations, shall decamp; for he might perhaps consider me as an adviser, caballer, confidante, or at least a troublesome spectator. All reconciliation scenes should be without spectators. Men do not like to be seen on their knees: they are at a loss, like Sir Walter Raleigh in "The Critic;" they cannot get off gracefully.——I am, dear Margaret,

Yours affectionately,

HELEN C——

LETTER XCI.

General B—— to Mr. L——.

MY DEAR L——, March 20, ——.

ASK yourself in the name of common sense why you should go to Petersburg with this sentimental coquette, this romantic termagant, of whom I see you are already more than half tired. As to your being bound to her in honour, I cannot see how. Why should you make honour, justice, humanity, and gratitude, plead so finely all on one side, and that the wrong side of the question? Have none of these one word to whisper in favour of any body in this world but of a worthless mistress, who makes you miserable? I think you have learned from your heroine to be so expert in

sentimental logic, that you can change virtues into vices, and vices into virtues, till at last you do not know them asunder. Else why should you make it a point of conscience to abandon your wife?—just at the moment too when you are thoroughly convinced of her love for you, when you are touched to the soul by her generous conduct, and when your heart longs to return to her?

Please to remember that this Lady Olivia's reputation was not unimpeached before her acquaintance with you, and do not take more glory or more blame to yourself than properly [illegible] your share. Do not forget [illegible]* was your predecessor, and do not let this delicate Lady rest all the weight of her shame upon you, as certain Chinese culprits rest their portable pillories on the shoulders of their friends.

In two days I shall follow this letter, and repeat in person all the interrogatories I have just put to you, my dear friend. Prepare yourself to answer me sincerely such questions as I shall ask.

Yours truly,

J. B.

LETTER XCII.

From Olivia to Mr. L——.

Monday,
12 o'Clock.

FOR a few days did you say? To *bid adieu*? Oh! if once more you return to that fatal castle, that enchanted home, Olivia for ever loses all power over your heart. Bid her die, stab her to the heart, and she will call it mercy, and she will bless you with her dying lips; but talk not of leaving your Olivia! On her knees she writes this, her face all bathed in tears. And must she in her turn implore and supplicate? Must she abase herself even to the dust? Yes—love like hers vanquishes even the stubborn potency of female pride.

Your too fond

OLIVIA.

LETTER XCIII.

From Olivia to Mr. L——.

[Dated a few hours after the preceding.]

Monday,
Half past three.

OH! this equivocating answer to my fond heart! Passion makes, and admits of no compromise. Be mine, and wholly mine, or never, never will I survive your desertion! I can be happy only whilst I love; I can love only whilst I am beloved with fervency equal to my own; and when I cease to love, I cease to exist! No coward fears restrain my soul. The word suicide shocks not my ear, appals not my understanding. Death I consider but

as the eternal rest of the wretched, the sweet, the sole refuge of despair.

Your resolute

OLIVIA.

LETTER XCIV.

From Olivia to Mr. L——.

Tuesday.

RETURN! return! on the wings of love return to the calm, the prudent, the happy, the transcendantly happy Leonora! Return—but not to bid her adieu—return to be hers for ever, and only hers. I give you back your faith—I *give* you back your promises—you have [illegible] back your heart.

But [illegible]ou should desire once more to see Olivia, if you should have any lingering wish to bid her a last adieu, it must be this evening.—To morrow's sun rises not for Olivia.—For her but a few short hours remain.—Love, let

them be all thy own! Intoxicate thy victim, mingle pleasure in the cup of death, and bid her fearless quaff it to the dregs!——

LETTER XCV.

Mr. L—— to General B——,

Thursday,
MY DEAR FRIEND, March 24, ——

YOU have by argument and raillery, and by every means that kindness and goodness could devise, endeavoured to expel from my mind a passion which you justly foresaw would be destructive of my happiness, and of the peace of a most estimable and amiable woman. With all the skill that a thorough knowledge of human nature in general, and of my peculiar character and foibles could bestow, you have employed those

——"Words and spells, which can control,
Between the fits, the fever of the soul."

Circumstances have operated in con-

junction with your skill to "medicine me to repose." The fits have gradually become weaker and weaker, the fever is now gone, but I am still to suffer for the extravagancies committed during its delirium. I have entered into engagements which must be fulfilled; I have involved myself in difficulties from which I see no method of extricating myself honourably. Notwithstanding all the latitude which the system of modern gallantry allows to the conscience of our sex, and in spite of the convenient maxim, which maintains that all arts are allowable in love and war, I think that a man cannot break a promise, whether made in words or by tacit implication, on the faith of which a woman sacrifices her reputation and happiness. Lady Olivia has thrown herself upon my protection. I am as sensible as you can be,

my dear General, that scandal had attacked her reputation before our acquaintance commenced; but though the world had suspicions, they had no proofs; now there can be no longer any defence made for her character, there is no possibility of her returning to that rank in society to which she was entitled by her birth, and which she adorned with all the brilliant charms of wit and beauty; no happiness, no chance of happiness remains for her but from my constancy. Of naturally violent passions, unused to the control of authority, habit, reason, or religion, and at this time impelled by love and jealousy, Olivia is on the brink of despair. I am not apt to believe that women die in modern times for love, nor am I easily disposed to think that I could inspire a dangerous degree of enthusiasm; yet I am persuaded that Olivia's passion, com-

pounded as it is of various sentiments beside love, has taken such possession of her imagination, and is, as she fancies, so necessary to her existence, that if I were to abandon her, she would destroy that life which she has already attempted, I thank God! ineffectually. What a spectacle is a woman in a paroxysm of rage!—a woman we [illegible], or whom we have loved!

March 25, ——.

Excuse me, my dear friend, if I wrote incoherently, for I have been interrupted many times since I began this letter. I am this day overwhelmed by a multiplicity of affairs, which, in consequence of Olivia's urgency to leave England immediately, must be settled with an expedition for which my head is not at present well qualified. I do not feel

well: I can command my attention but on one subject, and on that all my thoughts are to no purpose. Which ever way I now act, I must endure and inflict misery. I must either part from a wife who has given me the most tender, the most touching proofs of affection; a wife who is all that man can esteem, admire, and love: or I must abandon a mistress, who loves me with all the desperation of passion, to which she would fall a sacrifice. But why do I talk as if I were still at liberty to make a choice?—My head is certainly very confused. I forgot that I am bound by a solemn promise, and this is the evil which distracts me. I will give you, if I can, a clear narrative.

Last night I had a terrible scene with Olivia. I foresaw that she would be alarmed by my intended visit to L——

Castle, even though it was but to take leave of my Leonora. I abstained from seeing Olivia to avoid altercation, and with all the delicacy in my power I wrote to her, assuring her that my resolution was fixed. Note after note came from her with pathetic and passionate appeals to my heart; but I was still resolute. At length the day before that on which I was to set out for L—— Castle, she wrote to warn me, that if I wished to take a last farewell, I must see her that evening: her note concluded with, "To-morrow's sun will not rise for Olivia." This threat, and many strange hints of her opinions concerning suicide, I at the time disregarded, as only thrown out to intimidate a lover. However, knowing the violence of Olivia's temper, I was punctual to the appointed hour, fully

determined by my firmness to convince her that these female wiles were vain.

My dear friend, I would not advise the wisest man and the most courageous upon earth to brave such dangers, confident in his strength. Even a victory may cost him too dear.

I found Olivia reclining on a sofa, her beautiful tresses unbound, her dress the perfection of elegant negligence. I half suspected that it was studied negligence: yet I could not help pausing, as I entered, to contemplate her figure. She never looked more beautiful—more fascinating. Holding out her hand to me, she said, with her languid smile and tender expression of voice and manner, "You *are* come then to bid me farewell. I doubted whether . . . . . But I will not upbraid—mine be all the pain of this last adieu.

During the few minutes we have to pass together,

"Between us two let there be peace."

I sat down beside her, rather agitated, I confess, but commanding myself so that my emotion could not be visible. In a composed tone I asked why she spoke of a last adieu? and observed that we should meet again in a few days.

Never! replied Olivia. Weak woman as I am, love inspires me with sufficient force to make and to keep this resolution.

As she spoke, she t[illegible] a rose, and presenting [illegible] manner, "Put this rose [illegible] night," continued she—"to[illegible] will be alive!"

Her look, her expressive eyes, seemed to say, this flower will be alive, but

Olivia will be dead. I am ashamed to confess, that I was silent, because I could not just then speak.

"I have used some precaution," resumed Olivia, "to spare you, my dearest L——, unnecessary pain.—Look around you."

The room, I now for the first time observed, was ornamented with flowers.

"This apartment, I hope," continued she, "has not the air of the chamber of death. I have endeavoured to give it a festive appearance, that the remembrance ... erview with your once ... be at least unmixed

... instant, my dear General, a confused recollection of Rousseau's Heloise, the dying scene, and her room ornamented with flowers, came into

my imagination, and destroying the idea of reality, changed suddenly the whole course of my feelings.

In a tone of raillery I represented to Olivia her resemblance to Julie, and observed, that it was a pity she had not a lover whose temper was more similar than mine to that of the divine St. Preux. Stung to the heart by my ill-timed raillery, Olivia started up from the sofa, broke from my arms with sudden force, snatched from the table a penknife, and plunged it into her side.

She was about to repeat the blow, but I caught her arm—she struggled.—"Promise me then," cried she, "that you will never more see my hated rival."

I cannot make such a promise, Olivia, said I, holding her uplifted arm forcibly. I will not make such a promise.

The words, "hated rival," which showed me that Olivia was actuated more by the spirit of hatred than love, made me reply in as decided a tone as even you could have spoken, my dear General. But I was shocked, and reproached myself with cruelty, when I saw the blood flow from her side; she was terrified. I took the knife from her powerless hand, and she fainted in my arms. I had sufficient presence of mind to reflect that what had happened should be kept as secret as possible; therefore without summoning Josephine, whose attachment to her mistress I have reason to suspect, I threw open the windows, gave Olivia air and water, and her senses returned: then I dispatched my Swiss for a surgeon. I need not speak of my own feelings—no suspense could be more dreadful than that which I endured between the

sending for the surgeon and the moment when he gave his opinion. He relieved me at once, by pronouncing it to be a slight flesh wound, that would be of no manner of consequence. Olivia, however, whether from alarm or pain, or from the sight of the blood, fainted three times during the dressing of her side; and though the surgeon assured her that it would be perfectly well in [illegible]w days, she was evidently apprehensive that we concealed from her the real danger. At the idea of the approach of death, which now took possession of her imagination, all courage forsook [illegible]nd for some time my efforts to s[illegible] her spirits were ineffectual. S[illegible]ld not dispense with the services [illegible]ephine; and from the moment this [illegible]nch woman entered the room there w[illegible] nothing to be heard but exclamations the most vio-

lent and noisy. As to assistance, she could give none. At last her exaggerated demonstrations of horror and grief ended with,

"Dieu merci! au moins nous voilà delivré de ce voyage affreux. Apparemment qu'il ne sera plus question de ce vilain Petersburg pour Madame."

A new train of thoughts were roused by these words in Olivia's mind; and looking at me, she eagerly inquired why the journey to Petersburg was to be given up, if she was in no danger? I assured her that Jos[illegible] spoke at random, that my intentio[illegible] th regard to the embassy to Ru[illegible] e unaltered.

"Seuleme[illegible] ardé un peu?" said Josephine, wh[illegible] as intent only upon her own selfish object. "Sûrement Madame ne voyagera pas dans cet etat."

Olivia started up, and looking at me with terrific wildness in her eyes:

Swear to me, said she, swear that you will not deceive me, or I will this instant tear open this wound, and never more suffer it to be closed.

Deceive you, Olivia! cried I, what deceit can you fear from me?—What is it you require of me?

I require from you a promise, a solemn promise, that you will go with *me* to Russia.

I solemnly promise that I will, said I —now be tranquil, Olivia, I beseech you.

The surgeon represented the necessity of keeping herself quiet, and declared that he would not answer for the cure of his patient on any other terms. Satisfied by the solemnity of my promise, Olivia now suffered me to depart. This

morning she sends me word that in a few days she shall be ready to leave England. Can you meet me, my dear friend, at L—— Castle? I go down there to day to bid adieu to my Leonora. From thence I shall proceed to Yarmouth, and embark immediately. Olivia will follow me.

Your obliged

F. L.

LETTER XCVI.

Leonora to her Mother.

L—— Castle,
March 28, ——.

DEAREST MOTHER,

MY husband is here! at home with me, with your happy Leonora—and his heart is with her. His looks, his voice, his manner tell me so, and by them I never was deceived. No, he is incapable of deceit. Whatever have been his errors, he never stooped to dissimulation. He is again my own, still capable of loving me, still worthy of all my affection. I knew that the delusion could not last long, or rather you told me so, my best friend, and I believed you; you did him

deceived

His passions were under the power of an enchantress; but now he has triumphed over her arts. He sees her such as she is, and her influence ceases.

I am not absolutely certain of all this; but I believe, because I hope it: yet he is evidently embarrassed, and seems unhappy: what can be the meaning of this? Perhaps [illegible] does not yet know his Leonora sufficiently to be secure of [illegible] forgiveness. How I long to set his heart at ease, and to say to him—let the past be forgotten for ever. How easy it is to t[illegible]y to forgive! There have been moments when I could not, I fear, have been just, when I am sure that I could not have been generous. I shall immediately offer to accompany Mr. L—— [illegible] Russia; I can [illegible] further hesita- [illegible] I see th[illegible]

is alread[illegible] embarked at Yarmouth—he sails [illegible] days—and in a few hours your [illegible] your daughter's happiness [illegible] ided. It is decided, for I am sure [illegible]: I see, I hear, I feel it. Deare[illegible] in the first moment [illegible] [illegible] to you

Your [illegible] oy.—I hear his foot upon the stairs.

LETTE

Leonor... ...ther.

L—— Castle,
April 2, ——.

MY DEAR MOT

MY hopes are a... ...vain. Your prophe-
cies will never... accomplished. We
...ken in Mr. L——'s
... henceforward your daugh-
...pend upon him for any
...appiness. I once thought
...my love for him could
... diminis... ...as changed my opi-
nion. Mine ...t species of weak
or abject affec... ...can exist under
the sense of ill ...eatment and injustice,
much less can my love survive esteem for
its object.

I told you, my dear mother, and in

the fond credulity of my heart I believed, that his affections had returned to me. But I was mistaken. He has not sufficient strength or generosity of soul to love me, or to do justice to my love. I offered to go with him to Russia—he answered,—"That is impossible."—Impossible!—Is it then impossible for him to do that which is just or honourable? or seeing what is right, must he follow what is wrong? or can his heart never more be touched by virtuous affections? Is his taste so changed, so depraved, that he can now be pleased and charmed only by what is despicable and profligate in our sex? Then I should rejoice that we are to be separated—separated for ever. May years and years pass away and wear out, if possible, the memory of all he has been to me! I think I could better, much better bear the total loss, the death

of him I have loved, than endure to feel that he had survived both my affection and esteem; to see the person the same, but the soul changed; to feel every day, every hour, that I must despise what I have so admired and loved.

Mr. L—— is gone from hence. He leaves England the day after to morrow. Lady Olivia is to *follow* him. I am glad that public decency is not to be outraged by their embarking together. My dearest mother, be assured that at this moment your daughter's feelings are worthy of you. Indignation, the indignation and the pride of virtue support her spirit.

LEONORA L——.

LETTER XCVIII.

General B—— to Lady Leonora L——.

Yarmouth, April 5, ——.

HAD I not the highest confidence in Lady Leonora L——'s fortitude, I should not venture to write to her at this moment, knowing a[illegible]hat she is but just recovered fro[illegible]erous illness.

Mr. L—— had [illegible]d me to meet him at L—— Castle previous to his leaving England, but it was out of my power. I met him however on the road to Yarmouth; and as we travelled together, I had full opportunity of seeing the state of his mind. Permit me, the urgency of the case requires it, to speak without reserve, with the freedom of an old

friend. I imagine that your Ladyship parted from Mr. L—— with feelings of indignation, at which I cannot be surprised: but if you had seen him as I saw him, indignation would have given way to pity. Loving you, Madam, as you deserve to be loved, most ardently, most tenderly; touched to his inmost soul by the proofs of affection he had seen in your let[illegible] your whole conduct, even to [illegible] moment of parting, my unh[illegible]nd felt himself bound to resis[illegible]e temptation of staying with you, or of accepting your generous offer to accompany him to Petersburg. He was bound by a solemn promise, which he could not break, though it was extorted fr[illegible] him, to save from suicide one whom he thinks he has injured, one who has thrown herself upon his protection. Of the con-

flict in his mind at parting with your Ladyship I can judge by what he suffered afterwards. I met Mr. L—— with feelings of extreme indignation, but before I had been an hour in his company I never pitied any man so much in my life, for I never yet saw any one so truly wretched, and so thoroughly convinced that he deserved to be so.—You know that he is not one who often gives way to his emotions, not one who expresses them much in words, but he could not command his feelings.

The struggle was too violent. I have no doubt that it was the real cause of his present illness. As the moment approached when he was to leave England, he became more and more agitated; but firm to his fatal promise. Towards evening he sunk into a sort of apathy and gloomy silence, from which he sud-

denly broke into delirious raving. At twelve o'clock last night, the night he was to have sailed, he was seized with a violent and infectious fever. As to the degree of immediate danger, the physicians here cannot yet pronounce. I have sent to town for Dr. *****. Your Ladyship may be certain that I shall not quit my friend, and that he shall have every possible assistance and attendance.

I am, with the truest esteem,

Your Ladyship's

Faithful servant,

J. B.

LETTER XCIX.

Leonora to her Mother.

L—— Castle,
April 6, ——.

DEAR MOTHER,

THIS moment an express from General B——. My husband is dangerously ill at Yarmouth—a fever, brought on by the agitation of his mind. How unjust I have been! Forget all I said in my last. I write in the utmost haste—just setting out for Yarmouth. I hope to be there to morrow.

Your affectionate
LEONORA L——.

I open this to enclose the General's letter, which will explain every thing.

LETTER C.

General B—— to the Duchess of ——.

Yarmouth,
April 8, ——.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR Grace, I find, is apprised of Lady Leonora L——'s journey hither: I fear that you rely upon my prudence for preventing her exposing herself to the danger of catching this dreadful fever. But that has been beyond my power. Her Ladyship arrived late last night. I had foreseen the probability of her coming, but not the possibility of her coming so soon. I had taken no precautions, and she was in the house and upon the stairs in an instant. No entreaties, no arguments could stop her; I assured her that Mr.

L——'s fever was pronounced by all the physicians to be of the most infectious kind. Dr. **** joined with me in representing that she would expose her life to almost certain danger if she persisted in her determination to see her husband; but she pressed forward, regardless of all that could be said. To the physicians she made no answer—to me she replied, "You are Mr. L——'s friend; but I am his wife—you have not feared to hazard your life for him, and do you think I can hesitate?—Is he less dear to me? or am I more selfish?" I urged that there was no necessity for more than one person's running this hazard; that since it had fallen to my lot to be with my friend when he was first taken ill . . . . She interrupted me,—"Is not this taking a cruel advantage of me, General? you know that I too would have been with

Mr. L—— if . . . . if it had been possible." Her manner, her pathetic emphasis, and the force of her implied meaning, struck me so much, that I was silent, and suffered her to pass on; but again the idea of her danger rushing upon my mind, I sprang before her to the door of Mr. L——'s apartment, and opposed her entrance. "Then, General," said she calmly, "perhaps you mistake me—perhaps you have heard repeated some unguarded words of mine in the moment of indignation . . . unjust . — you best know how unjust indignation!—and you infer from these that my affection for my husband is extinguished. I deserve this—but do not punish me too severely.

I still kept my hand upon the lock of the door, expostulating with Lady Leonora in your Grace's name, and in

Mr. L——'s, assuring her that if he were conscious of what was passing, and able to speak, he would order me to prevent her seeing him in h ispresent situation.

"And you too, General!" said she, bursting into tears, "I thought you were my friend—would you prevent me from seeing him? And is not he conscious of what is passing?—And is not he able to speak? Sir, I must be admitted! You have done your duty—now let me do mine. Consider, my right is superior to yours. No power o[illegible]hou[illegible] or can prevent a wife from seeing h[illegible] husband when he is . . . . . . Dear, dear General! said she, clasping her raised hands, and falling suddenly at my feet, let me see him but for one minute, and I will be grateful to you for ever!

I could resist no longer.—I tremble for the consequences. Her excellent friend, Mrs. C——, accompanied her hither: but was prevented by Lady Leonora from entering this house. Would to God I could have had similar influence over Lady Leonora herself! but it is past now, and we must wait the event. I know your Grace sufficiently to be aware, that you ought to be told the whole truth. I have but little hopes of my poor friend's life.

With much respect,
Your Grace's
Faithful Servant,

J. B.

LETTER CI.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Richmond.

A MIST hung over my eyes, and "my ears with hollow murmurs rung," when the dreadful tidings of your alarming illness were announced by your cruel messenger. My dearest L——! why does inexorable destiny doom me to b[illegible] absent from you at such a crisis? [illegible] this fatal [illegible] fear, cer[illegible] travel. So t[illegible] being m[illegible] imprisoned h[illegible] my anxious [illegible], my viewless spirit hovers near you, longing to minister each tender consolation, each nameless comfort that love alone

can with fond prescience, and magic speed, summon round the couch of pain.

"O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly to you!" Why must I resign the sweetly painful task of soothing you in the hour of sickness? And shall others, with officious zeal,

"Guess the faint wish, explain the asking eye?"

Alas! it must be so—even were I to [illegible] to him, my sensibility could not sup- [illegible] the scene.—To behold him stretched [illegible] of death, [illegible] ance.—Let [illegible] rves [illegible], and hearts m[illegible]e callous, assu[illegible] offices from which they shrink not. 'Tis the fate, the hard fate of all endued with exquisite sensibility, to be palsied by the

excess of their feelings, and to become imbecile at the moment their exertions are most necessary.

Your too tenderly sympathising

OLIVIA.

LETTER CII.

Leonora to her Mother.

Yarmouth, April 8, ——.

MY husband is alive, and that is all. Never did I see, nor could I have conceived such a change, and in so short a time! When I opened the door his eyes turned upon me with unmeaning eagerness: he did not know me. The good General thought my voice might have some effect. I spoke, but could obtain no answer, no sign of intelligence. In vain I called upon him by every name that used to reach his heart. I kneeled beside him, and took one of his burning hands in mine. I kissed it, and suddenly he started up, exclaiming—Olivia!

—Olivia!—with dreadful vehemence. In his delirium he raved about Olivia's stabbing herself, and called upon us to hold her arm, looking wildly towards the foot of the bed, as if the figure were actually before him. Then he sunk back as if quite exhausted, and gave a deep sigh. Some of my tears fell upon his hand; he felt them before I perceived that they had fallen, and looked so earnestly in my face, that I was in hopes his recollection was returning; but he only said, "Olivia, I believe that you love me"—then sighed more deeply than before, drew his hand away from me, and, as well as I could distinguish, said something about Leonora.

But why should I give you the pain of hearing all these circumstances, my dear mother? It is enough to say, that

he passed a dreadful night. This morning the physicians say, that if he passes this night—if—My dear mother, what a terrible suspense!

LEONORA L——.

LETTER CIII.

Leonora to her Mother.

Yarmouth, April 9, ——.

MORNING is at last come, and my husband is still alive, so there is yet hope. When I said I thought I could bear to survive him, how little I knew of myself, and how little, how very little I expected to be so soon tried. All evils are remediable but one, that one which I dare not name.

The physicians assure me it [illegible] better. His friend, to [illegible] I trust more, thinks [illegible] they do. I know not what to believe. I dread to flatter myself and [illegible] be disappointed. I will write again, dearest mother, to morrow.

Your ever affectionate

LEONORA L——

LETTER CIV.

Leonora to her Mother.

Wednesday,
April 12, ——.

NO material change since yesterday, my dear mother. This morning, as I was searching for some medicine, I saw on the chimney-piece a note from Lady Olivia ——. It might have been there yesterday, and ever since my arrival, but I did not see it. At any other time it would have excted my indignation, but [illegible] too much weakened by [illegible]rs for my husband's life absorb all other feelings. I am quite stupified. The General will add a few lines.

LETTER CV.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Richmond, April 12th.

WORDS cannot express what I have suffered wr t! Oh! why do I not hear that the dan er is over!— Long since would I have b all that my soul holds dear, escaped from these tyrant cal despots, who detain n ate force, and watch over me with unrelenting vigilance. I have consulted Dr. ***, who assures me that my fears of my wound opening, were I to take so long a journey, are too well founded, that in the present feverish state of

my mind he would not answer for the consequences.—I heed him not.—Life I value not.—Most joyfully would I sacrifice myself for the man I love. But even could I escape from my persecutors, too well I know that to see you would be a vain attempt—too well I know that I should not be admitted. Your love, yo[illegible]s f[illegible] would barbarously [illegible]nish her, and forbid her [illegible]ur dangerous atmosphere. [illegible]would you urge that my [illegible]t prove our mutual ruin—th[illegible]ment of crisis or of convalescence, anxiety for me might defeat the kind purpose of nature. And even were I secure of your recovery, the delay, I speak not of the danger of my catching the disease, would,—circumstanced as we are,—be death to our hopes.

We should be compelled to part. The winds would waft you from me. The waves would bear you to another region, far, O far from your

OLIVIA.

LETTER CVI.

Leonora to her Mother.

Yarmouth,
April 14, ——.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

THE delirium has subsided. A few minutes ago, as I was kneeling beside him, offering up an almost hopeless prayer for his recovery, his eyes opened, and I perceived that he knew me. He closed his eyes again without speaking, opened them once more, and then looking at me fixedly, exclaimed: "It is not a dream!—You are Leonora!—*my* Leonora!"

What exquisite pleasure I felt at the sound of these words, at the tone in which they were pronounced! My husband folded me in his arms; and, till I

felt his burning lips, I forgot that he was ill.

When he came thoroughly to his recollection, and when the idea that his fever might be infectious occurred to him, he endeavoured to prevail upon me to leave the room. But what danger can there be for me *now*? My whole soul, my whole frame is inspired with new life. If he recover, your daughter may still be happy.

Postscript by General B——.

I fear that Lady Leonora is too sanguine in these hopes of her husband's recovery.

J. B.

LETTER CVII.

General B—— to the Duchess of ——.

MY DEAR MADAM, April 16, ——.

MR. L—— has had a relapse, and is now more alarmingly ill than I have yet seen him; he does not know his situation, for his delirium has returned. The physicians give him over. Dr. H—— says that we must prepare for the worst.

I have but one word of comfort for your Grace—that your admirable daughter's health has not yet suffered.

Your Grace's

Faithful Servant,

J. B.

LETTER CVIII.

General B—— to the Duchess of ——.

MY MADAM, April 18, ——.

A FEW [illegible] to my friend became perfectly sensib[illegible], and calling me to his bed-side, told me that he was eager to make use of the l[illegible]tle time which he might have to live. He was quite calm and collected. He employed me to write his last wishes and requests; and I must do him the justice to declare, that the stronges[illegible] idea and feeling in his mind evidently was the desire to show his entire confidence in his wife, and to give her, in his last moments, proofs of his esteem and affection. When he had settled his affairs, he begged to be left

alone for some time. Between twelve and one his bell rang, and he desired to see Lady Leonora and me. He spoke to me with that warmth of friendship, which he has ever felt from our childhood. Then turning to his wife, his voice utterly failed, and h[illegible] only press to his lips th[illegible]nd, which was held out [illegible]im in speechless agony.

"Excellent woman!" he articulated at last; then collecting his mind, he exclaimed, "My beloved Leonora, I will not die without expressing my feelings for you; I know yours for me. I do not ask for that forgiveness which your generous heart granted long before I deserved it. Your affection for me has been shown by actions at the hazard of your life; I can only thank you with weak words. You possess my whole

heart, my esteem, my admiration, my gratitude.

Lady Leonora, at the word *gratitude*, made an effort to speak, and laid her hand upon her husband's lips. He added, in a more enthusiastic tone, You have my undivided love. Believe in the truth of these words—perhaps they are the last I may ever speak.

My friend sunk back exhausted, and I carried his wife out of the room.

I returned half an hour ago, and found every thing silent: Mr. L—— is lying with his eyes closed—quite still—I hope asleep. This may be a favourable crisis. I cannot delay this letter longer.

Your Grace's

Faithful Servant,

J. B.

LETTER CIX.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Richmond, April 17th.

"Say, is not absence death to those that love?"

HOW just, how beautiful a sentiment! yet cold and callous is that heart, which knows not that there is a pang more dreadful than absence; far as the death of lingering torture exceeds, in corporeal sufferance, the soft slumber of expiring nature. Suspense! suspense! compared with thy racking agony, even absence is but the blessed euthanasia of love.

My dearest L——, why this torturing silence? One line, one word, I beseech you, from *your own hand*; say but *I* [illegible] *you*, [illegible] *Olivia*. Hour after

hour, and day after day have I wait and waited, and hoped, and fear hear from you. O this intolerable agonizing suspense! Yet hope clings to my fond heart—Hope! sweet treacherous Hope!

> "Non so si la Speranza
> "Va con l'inganno unita;
> "So che mantiene in vita
> "Qualche infelici almen."

OLIVIA.

LETTER CX.

Leonora to her Mother.

DEAREST MOTHER, April 19, ——.

HE has slept several hours.—Even Dr. H——, the most desponding of all his physicians, says that we may now expect his recovery. Adieu. The good General will add a line to assure you that I am not deceived, nor too sanguine.

Yours most affectionately,

LEONORA L——.

Postscript by General B——.

I have some hopes.

LETTER CXI.

Leonora to her Mother.

Yarmouth,
April 25, ——.

DEAREST MOTHER,

EXCELLENT news for you to day!—Mr. L—— is pronounced out of danger. He seems excessively touched by my coming here, and so grateful for the little kindness I have been able to show him during his illness! But, alas! that fatal promise! the recollection of it comes across my mind like a spectre. Mr. L—— has never touched upon this subject,—I do all in my power to divert his thoughts to indifferent objects.

This morning, when I went into his room, I found him tearing to pieces that note which I mentioned to you a few days ago. He seemed much agitated, and desired to see General B——. They are now together, and were talking so loud in the next room to me, that I was obliged to retire, lest I should overhear secrets. Mr. L—— this moment sends for me. If I should not have time to add more, this short letter will satisfy you for to day.

LEONORA L——.

I open my letter to say, that I am not so happy as I was when I began it. I have heard all the circumstances relative to this terrible promise, and I see no hope. Mr. L——

must go to Russia with Lady Olivia. He is bound by a solemn promise. I am as far from happiness as ever.

LETTER CXII.

Mr. L—— to Olivia.

Yarmouth,
April 25, ——.

MY DEAR OLIVIA,

THIS is the first line I have written since my illness. I could not sooner relieve you from suspense, for during most of this time I have been delirious, and never till now able to write. My physicians have this morning pronounced me out of danger; and as soon as my strength is sufficient to bear the voyage, I shall sail, according to my promise.

Your prudence, or that of your physicians, have saved me much anxiety—perhaps saved my life: for had you been so rash as to come hither, beside my

fears for your safety, I should have been exposed in the moment of my returning reason to a conflict of passions which I could not have borne.

Leonora is with me; she arrived the night after I was taken ill, and forced her way to me, when my fever was at the highest, and while I was in a state of delirium.

Lady Leonora will stay with me till the moment I sail, which I expect to do in about ten days. I cannot say positively, for I am still very weak, and may not be able to keep my word to a day. Adieu. I hope your mind will now be at ease. I am glad to hear from the surgeon that your wound is quite closed. I will write again, and more fully, when I am better able. Believe me, Olivia, I am most anxi-

ous to secure your happiness: allow me to believe that this will be in the power of

Yours sincerely,

F. L.

LETTER CXIII.

Olivia to Mr. L——.

Richmond.

BARBAROUS man! with what cold cruelty you plunge a dagger into my heart! Leonora is with you!—Leonora! —Then I am undone. Yes, she will—she has resumed all her power, her rights, her habitual empire over your heart.—Wretched Olivia!—But you say it is your wish to secure my happiness, you bid me allow you to believe it is in your power. What phrases!—You will sail, *according to your promise.*—Then nothing but your honour binds you to Olivia. And even now, at this guilty instant, in your secret soul, you wish, you expect from my offended pride, from my disgusted

delicacy, a renunciation of this promise, a release from all the ties that bind you to me. You are right: this is what I ought to do; what I would do, if love had not so weakened my soul, so prostrated my spirit, rendered me so abject a creature, that I *cannot*, what I *would*.

I must love on—female pride and resentment call upon me in vain. I cannot hate you. Even by the feeble tie, which I see you long to break, I must hold, rather than let you go for ever. I will not renounce your promise. I claim it. I adjure you by all which a man of honour holds most sacred, to quit England the moment your health will allow you to sail. No equivocating with your conscience!—I hold you to your word. Oh, my dearest L——! to feel myself reduced to use such language to

you, to find myself clinging to that last resource of shipwrecked love, *a promise!* It is with unspeakable agony I feel all this; lower I cannot sink in misery. Raise me, if indeed you wish my happiness—raise me! it is yet in your power. Tell me, that my too susceptible heart has mistaken phantoms for realities—tell me, that your last was not colder than usual—yes, I am ready to be deceived. Tell me that it was only the languor of disease; assure me that my rival forced her way only to your presence, that she has not won her easy way back to your heart—assure me that you are impatient once more to see your own

OLIVIA.

LETTER CXIV.

Mrs. C—— to the Duchess of ——.

Yarmouth, April 28, ——.

YOUR Grace is very kind to write to me in my banishment: I wonder how you can think of me when your mind must be so anxious about Lady Leonora. Her health has not suffered by her attendance upon her husband. I begin to have faith in the power of mind over body in preventing the approach of disease. The spells of a resolute soul seem sometimes to bid defiance to danger. Leonora in all situations surpasses even my expectations; but to her the greatest instances of generosity are so easy and natural, that she is surprised by the admiration which she excites.

Mr. L——'s fever has brought me into some charity with him; for he has been not only desperately ill, but desperately penitent. I begin to feel some mercy; but before I think of liking him, I must see how he behaves about this embassy to Russia. I hear that he is bound by some promise.—Nonsense!—If more evil would accrue from keeping this promise, than from breaking it, would it not be criminal to abide by his word? Besides, no man can be bound by an unlawful oath; or ought, against his better judgment, to be compelled by a rash promise to do wrong—a promise extorted by the fear that another would commit suicide if it were not granted—a compulsatory promise! I cannot put all this logically to Mr. L——'s understanding, nor am I casuist enough to make out a case of conscience: but if your Grace would

write to Mr. L——, you would make the matter perfectly clear; and you could infuse into him a portion of your own strength of mind. Let me entreat your Grace to write immediately, for he talks of sailing the moment he is well; and I am afraid he will be well in a few days.

Believe me to be,
My dear Madam,
Your Grace's
Sincerely attached
HELEN C——.

LETTER CXV.

Leonora to her Mother.

Yarmouth,
May 6, ——.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

CAN you believe or imagine, that I am actually unwilling to say or to think, that my husband is quite well?—yet this is the fact. Such is the inconsistency and weakness of our natures—of my nature I should say. But a short time ago I thought that no evil could be so great as his danger; now, that danger is past, I dread to hear him say, that he is perfectly recovered. The moment he is able he goes to Russia; that is decided irrevocably. The promise has been claimed and repeated. A solemn promise cannot be broken for any human consideration.

I should despise him if he broke it; but can I love him for keeping it? His mind is at this instant agitated as much as mine is; more it cannot. Yet I ought to be better able to part with him now, than when we parted before; because I have now at least the consolation of knowing, that he leaves me against his will; that his heart will not go from me. This time I cannot be deceived; I have had the most explicit assurance of his *undivided* love. And indeed I was never deceived. You recollect that all the appearances of regret at parting with me were genuine. The General witnessed the consequent struggle in Mr. L——'s mind, and this fever followed.

I will endeavour to calm and content myself with the possession of his love, and with the assurance that he will return to me as soon as possible. As soon

as possible! but what a vague hope! He sails with the first fair wind. What a dreadful certainty! Perhaps to morrow! Oh, my dearest mother, perhaps to night!

LEONORA L——.

LETTER CXVI.

General B—— to the Duchess of ———.

Yarmouth,
MY DEAR MADAM, May 10, ——.

TO day Mr. L—— finding himself sufficiently recovered, gave orders to all his suite to embark, and the wind being fair, determined to go on board immediately. In the midst of the bustle of the preparations for his departure, Lady Leonora, exhausted by her former activity, and unable to take any part in what was passing, sat silent, pale, and motionless, opposite to a window, which looked out upon the sea; the vessel in which her husband was to

sail lay in sight, and her eyes were fixed upon the streamers, watching their motion in the wind.

Mr. L—— was in his own apartment writing letters. An express arrived; and among other letters for the English embassador to Russia, there was a large packet directed to Lady Leonora L——. Upon opening it, the crimson colour flew into her face, and she exclaimed, Olivia's letters!—Lady Olivia ——'s letters to Madame de P——. Who could send these to me? I give you joy with all my heart! cried I—no matter how they come—they come in the most fortunate moment possible. I would stake my life upon it they will unmask Olivia at once. Where is Mr. L——?—He must read them this moment.

I was hurrying out of the room to call

my friend, but Lady Leonora stopped my career, and checked the transport of my joy.

You do not think, my dear General, said she, that I would for any consideration do so dishonourable an action as to read these letters?

Only let Mr. L—— read them, interrupted I, that is all I ask of your ladyship. Give them to me. For the soul of me I can see nothing dishonourable in this. Let Lady Olivia be judged by her own words. Your ladyship shall not be troubled with her trash, but give the letters to me, I beseech you.

No—I cannot, said Lady Leonora steadily. It is a great temptation; but I ought not to yield. She deliberately folded them up in a blank cover, directed them to Lady Olivia, and

sealed them; whilst I, half in admiration and half in anger, went on expostulating.

Good God! this is being too generous! But, my dear Lady Leonora, why will you sacrifice yourself? This is misplaced delicacy! Show those letters, and I'll lay my life Mr. L—— never goes to Russia.

My dear friend, said she, looking up with tears in her eyes, do not tempt me beyond my power to resist. Say no more. At this instant Mr. L—— came into the room; and I am ashamed to confess to your Grace, I really was so little master of myself, that I was upon the point of seizing Olivia's letters, and putting them into his hands. L——, said I, here is your admirable wife absurdly, yes, I must

say it, absurdly standing upon a point of honour with one who has none! That packet which she has before her . . .

Lady Leonora imposed silence upon me by one of those looks which no man can resist.

My dear Leonora, you are right, said Mr. L——; and you are almost right, my dear General; I know what that packet contains; and without doing any thing dishonourable, I hold myself absolved from my promise; I shall not go to Russia, my dearest wife! He flew into her arms—and, I left them. I question whether they either of them felt much more than I did.

For some minutes I was content with knowing that these things had really happened, that I had heard Mr. L——

say he was absolved from all promises, and that he would not go to Russia; but how did all this happen so suddenly? —How did he know the contents of Olivia's letters, and without doing any thing dishonourable? There are some people who cannot be perfectly happy till they know the *rationale* of their happiness. I am one of these. I did not feel "a sober certainty of waking bliss," till I read a letter which Mr. L—— received by the same express that brought Olivia's letters, and which he read while we were debating. I beg your Grace's pardon if I am too minute in explanation; but I do as I would be done by. The letter was from one of the private secretaries, who is, I understand, a relation and friend of Lady Leonora L——. As the original

goes this night to Lady Olivia, I send your Grace a copy. You will give me credit for copying, and at such a time as this! I congratulate your Grace, and

I have the honour to be, &c.,

J. B.

LETTER CXVII.

To Mr. L——.

[Private.]

London, St. James's street,
MY DEAR SIR, May 9, ——.

IN the same moment you receive this, your lady, for whom I have the highest regard, will receive from me a valuable present, a packet of Lady Olivia ——'s letters to one of her French friends. These letters were lately found in a French frigate, taken by one of our cruisers; and, as *intercepted correspondence* is the order of the day, these, with all the dispatches on board, were transmitted to our office to be examined, in hopes of making reprisals of state secrets.

The examination fortunately fell to my lot, as private secretary; and as these papers contain only family secrets, I obtained permission to send them to Lady Leonora L——, to ensure the triumph of virtue over vice; to put it into her ladyship's power completely to unmask her unworthy rival. These letters will show you by what arts you have been deceived. You will find yourself ridiculed as *a cold awkward Englishman*; one who will *hottentot again, whatever pains may be taken to civilize him*; *a man of ice*, to be taken as a lover from *pure charity*, or *pure curiosity*, or the pure *besoin d'aimer*. Here are many pure motives, of which you will, my dear Sir, take your choice. You will further observe in one of her letters, that Lady Olivia premeditated the design of prevailing with you to

carry her to Russia, that she might show her power *to that proudest of earthly prudes*, the Duchess of ******, and that she might *gratify her great revenge against Lady Leonora L——*.

Sincerely hoping, my dear Sir, that these letters may open your eyes, and restore you and my amiable relation to domestic happiness, I make no apology for the liberty I take, and cannot regret the momentary pain I may inflict. You are at liberty to make what use you think proper of this letter.

I have it in command from my Lord —— to add, that if your health, or any other circumstances, should render this embassy to Russia less desirable to you than it appeared some time ago, other arrangements can be made, and another

friend of government is ready to supply your place.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

———.

To F. L——, Esq., &c.

LETTER CXVIII.

Mr. L—— to Olivia.

Yarmouth, May 11, ——.

If the motives attributed to your ladyship, and the expressions quoted in the enclosed letter, should not be accurately stated, your ladyship will permit me to compare them with the originals; but under the persuasion that this permission cannot be granted, I return the packet which the fortune of war has put into my power; neither Lady Leonora L——, to whom it was addressed, nor I, have opened any of these letters.

The quotations from them are sufficient; and your ladyship will not

be surprised at my now declining to go to Russia. My conscience is at ease, as I hope yours may be, Olivia; as far as I am concerned let it be perfectly tranquil; for, permit me to assure you, that the mortification which my vanity has suffered was but momentary; the time when this could have given serious pain to my heart has been long since past; a confession which I may now make without scruple. I have to return your ladyship thanks for showing me what, if I had not been blinded by self-love, I might have sooner discovered, that your happiness is totally independent of me, and of my affection. I am still further obliged to your ladyship for recalling my understanding to the conviction of truths, which nothing but the fasci-

nation of your charms could have made me forget. You have completely convinced me, that the character of a sober, or, if you please, a cold Englishman, is totally unsuited to exotic systems of gallantry; that he can never find, even in the most polished intercourse which they can boast, a compensation for the loss of domestic happiness, and of that self-esteem which his principles or his prejudices connect with a different mode of conduct. As your ladyship justly observes, whatever pains you ke with an Englishman he will *hottentot* again.

Wishing that your ladyship may never in future waste your superior talents upon such unworthy subjects, and hoping that you may enjoy the satisfaction of having secured to one

of your numerous admirers permanent happiness,

I remain
Your Ladyship's
Most obedient
And humble Servant,
F. L——.

LETTER CXIX.

To the Duchess of ——.

Yarmouth, May 11, ——.

JOY! joy! joy!—Dearest mother, I cannot write to day.—Helen must.

Continued by Mrs. C——.

Helen must write—Yes, truly! as if Helen's head could not be turned with joy as well as another's. But in times of general rejoicing somebody must do the necessary business of life; and what so necessary as to give our friends a share of our happiness!—

Your Grace, the dear mother of Leonora, has the first claim. Briefly then—

Mr. L—— has recovered common sense and his liberty—*heureusement!*

Lady Olivia is unmasked—by her own hand.

Lady Leonora L—— is made the happiest of women—by her own virtues.

Mr. L—— has given up the Russian embassy, and I begin to love a little. We shall all go home together to morrow. By *home* I mean L—— Castle, and by *all* I mean to include the General. He has obtained a longer leave of absence. By the by, he tells me that I am charming— Would your Grace advise me to believe it?—And if he should swear?

——Your Grace may safely venture to give me your advice, for I can assure you I did *not* marry him yesterday.

HELEN C——.

LETTER CXX.

The Duchess of —— to Lady Leonora L——.

June 1. ——.

MY beloved daughter, pride and delight of your happy mother's heart! I give you joy. Your temper, fortitude, and persevering affection, have now their just reward. Enjoy your happiness, heightened as it must be by the sense of self-approbation, and the sympathy of all who know you. And now let me indulge the vanity of a mother; let me exult in the accomplishment of my prophecies, and let me be listened to with due humility, when I prophesy again. With as much

certainty as I foretold what is now present, I foresee, my child, your future destiny. I predict that you will preserve while you live your husband's fondest affections; I predict that your prudence will prevent you from indulging too far your taste for retirement, or for the exclusive society of your intimate friends. You will be aware that in an unchanged atmosphere the flame of love fades and expires; that in a purer element than ordinary its brilliancy is increased, but at the expense of its duration. You will mix with the world, my dear daughter, even now, when your heart is occupied by increased affection: even though the company you meet may be inferior in moral or intellectual excellence, yet it will ultimately be advantageous; you will return with more

zest to the society most dear to you; its value you will find increased by temporary privation, and by extensive comparisons. You will spend your winters in London: your rank, your fortune, and I may be permitted to add, your character, manners, and abilities, give you the power of drawing round you persons of the best information and of the highest talents—all that the arts, belles lettres, and science, can boast. You will continue to cultivate your excellent understanding. By the commerce of conversation your mental riches will daily increase; and your good taste will show all the elegance, without displaying the ostentation, of intellectual wealth. Your husband will find, in the society you may form, every thing that can attach him to his home; and in you, his most ration-

al friend and his most charming companion.

Is there any temerity in prophesying, that such a wife will for ever retain the fondest affections of her husband? And are not these, the natural means you will use, adequate to the effect, and superior to all the spells and amulets that ever witchcraft imposed upon love-sick fancy? For the good and wise there is in love a power unknown to the ignorant and the vicious, a power of comm[illegible] fresh energy to all the facu[illegible] the soul, of exalting them to the highest state of perfection.

The friendship which in time succeeds to such love is perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most permanent blessing of life.

An admirable German writer—you shall see, my dear, that I have no prejudices against good German writers—an admirable German writer says, that "Love is like the morning shadows, which diminish as the day advances; but friendship is like the shadows of the evening, which increase even till the setting of the sun."

Adieu, my beloved daughter. I am told [illegible] Lady Olivia —— is going to [illegible]ent, and that she declares [illegible] be her resolution never to return to England. She is in the right. England is not the place for women of her character.

Happy the climate in which no venomous creature can exist! More hap-

py the country under those salutary laws and opinions no exotic vice can flourish.

———.

THE END.

JOYCE GOLD, PRINTER, SHOE LANE.